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THE  
INTERIOR CASTLE



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The Transverberation

By Velasquez

*English Convent, Bruges*

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# THE INTERIOR CASTLE

OR

## THE MANSIONS

BY

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

(Reformer and Co-Founder with Saint John of the Cross of the Order  
of Discalced Carmelites)

(1515-1582)

Done into English by a Discalced Carmelite

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Saint Teresa's avowed intention in writing her book on "The Mansions" of the soul (Las Moradas), was to help her daughters to realise the part, that if they were faithful, God would play in their prayer. "I know very well," she says, "that it is of importance to you that I should explain some interior matters as clearly as I can, for we constantly hear how good it is to pray, and our Constitutions prescribe so many hours of prayer, but we are only told what we can do for ourselves, and little is told us of what God works in the soul, I mean supernatural prayer," that is, God's part in the prayer, his very definite response to the soul's desire for him. It has been said, that God will never be outdone in generosity, and Saint Teresa depicts in her own inimitable way, the full extent of that divine generosity, which, when the soul's surrender is complete, will never rest until transformation has reached the utmost limits of God's design, and the soul's capacity. Sacramental grace prepares the way. It opens the door to the divine Bridegroom, and he takes up his abode in the centre of the soul. Friendship with God is thus established, and will only be lost by mortal sin. But the divine Lover longs for something more from his creature. His love, as Monsignor Charles Gay once wrote, is a conjugal love. He sends forth, from his dwelling-place in the soul's centre, urgent, though gentle and persuasive calls. He has gifts to bestow, joys unknown to the worldly, and he looks for those on whom his love can lavish them. Some,—comparatively few, alas!—respond, but be the response ever so slight, God is quick to avail himself of it. At a favourable moment, he seizes upon the soul, and gives her, in a brief rapture, her first intimation of the divine favour. The soul finds herself, afterwards, greatly advanced in virtue, and strangely detached from the world and self.

Then commences that mutual interchange of love, but dimly shadowed in human relationships, which, if the soul perseveres through the severe purgation and proving that God sees to be necessary to her, will finally end in the tremendous consummation of love, the spiritual marriage of the soul with her Maker and Redeemer. Saint Paul defines it thus: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit," with him. Nothing less will satisfy either the Creator or the creature.

The great mother-heart of Saint Teresa was in travail, craving this supreme privilege for each one of her daughters, but her love also overflowed upon the worst of sinners, and she longed that they too might be made aware of the sweetness of the Shepherd, who had died to save them, and thus be induced to repent and to change their lives; and if not by love, then by fear, and she declares the great and terrifying truth, that since "in God we live and move and have our being," our sins, too, are actually committed in him.

The Saint deploras her ignorance, her untrained mind, her want of skill, but with a better mental equipment, she might have lost something of her spiritual power. The zeal and sincerity of her soul burst through the imperfections discernible in her composition, and like the gushing waters of which she delights to speak, give refreshment to the souls who place themselves under her motherly instruction. Channel of the Holy Ghost she was to those around her; she is not less so today to those who understand her message.

This translation\* has been asked for by Carmelite Superiors, or it might seem to be an impertinence to offer what may well be thought a crude interpretation of so grand a work. The object of the translation, as with the "Way of Perfection,"

is to provide Carmelite Novices with a very simple book, shorn of explanations, and of all but references, so that the work may speak to them as it stands, and as it was primarily presented to the first Discalced Carmelite nuns of old Spain.

If any among my Sisters in religion finds my imperfect work of any value to her, I commend myself to her holy prayers.

THE TRANSLATOR.

Feast of the Annunciation.

*March 25th, 1944.*

*\* The Spanish text used for this translation is that edited by V.R. Father Silverio de Santa Teresa, O.D.C., and published at Burgos in 1917.*



# THE INTERIOR CASTLE *OR* THE MANSIONS

JESUS !

This treatise, entitled "The Interior Castle," has been written by Teresa of Jesus, a nun of Our Lady of Carmel, for her sisters and daughters, the Discalced Carmelite nuns.\*

*\*Saint Teresa herself wrote this title-page for the book.*



## THE INTERIOR CASTLE

### JESUS !

Few things commanded me by obedience have presented to me so many difficulties as this of now having to write something on the subject of prayer ; first, because it does not seem to me that our Lord has given me either the spirit or the desire to do it, and secondly, for three months now, I have had such a noise in my head and such great weakness, that writing is painful, even for compulsory business. However, knowing that the power of obedience is wont to make easy things that seem to be impossible, I gladly set myself to the task, though nature is inclined to rebel, for the Lord has not bestowed on me so much virtue, that I do not feel keenly the struggle against constant illness, and the pressure of all kinds of duties. May he, who in his kindness towards me, has done even more difficult things, help me now, for my confidence is in his mercy.

Really, I believe there is little to add to what I have already said when I have been told to write; indeed, I fear I shall have to repeat the same things, just like the birds that we teach to speak. They know no more than what is taught them or that they hear, and this they repeat continually. I must do exactly the same. If the Lord wishes me to say something fresh, his Majesty will inspire me, or he will bring to my remembrance what I have said before, and even this would satisfy me, for my memory is very bad, and I should be pleased to recall certain things, which they say were well said, and which otherwise may be lost.\*

If the Lord will grant me neither this, nor that what I shall say be of profit to anyone, I shall still be the gainer, in tiring myself and increasing my headache, for the sake of obedience. Therefore, I am beginning to fulfil this duty today, the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, in the year 1577, in this monastery of Saint Joseph of Carmel, Toledo, where I am at present, and I submit myself in all that I may say to the judgment of those who command me to write, since they are persons of great learning. If I shall say anything that is not conformable with the teaching of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, it will be due to ignorance and not to malice. This may be held for certain, for I am always, and will be subject to her, by the goodness of God, as I have ever been. May he be for ever blessed and glorified. Amen.

He who commanded me to write, told me that the nuns of these monasteries of our Lady of Carmel are in need of someone to enlighten them on certain doubtful matters of prayer, and he thought that they would better understand a woman's language than that of others, and that the love they bear me would add weight to my words. Because of this love, he is convinced that some importance will attach to whatever I think fit to say, and for this reason, I intend in this writing to address myself to the nuns. Also, it would be foolish to imagine that it could be of service to anyone else. The Lord will do me a great favour if, among my daughters, some derive profit, and praise him a little more. But his Majesty knows well that I do not pretend to anything else, and if I succeed in saying something to the point, it must be clearly understood that it will not be mine, and they will have no cause to think so, unless they have as little sense as I have ability for such matters, if the Lord in his mercy do not grant it to me.

*\* The Saint's Life had, at this time, been submitted to the Inquisition.*





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## FIRST MANSIONS

### Chapter I

*The Saint treats of the beauty and dignity of our souls; she makes a comparison by which to explain this, and speaks of the advantage of realising it, and understanding the favours which we receive from God, declaring that the door into the Castle is prayer.*

Today, when I was imploring our Lord to speak in my place, because I did not know what to say, nor how to begin to fulfil this obedience, there was presented to my mind what I am about to write now, and it will serve by way of groundwork. That is, that we should regard the soul as a castle, made entirely of diamond or very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many mansions.\* And well-considered, Sisters, the soul of the just is nothing less than a paradise, where, as our Lord himself says, he takes his pleasure†. Then what kind of place will it be, do you think, in which a King so powerful, so wise, so pure, so rich in all good things, will take delight? I find nothing with which to compare the great beauty of a soul, and its vast capacity. And truly our intelligence, however keen, can scarcely grasp it, any more than we can understand God, to whose image and likeness, as he himself says, he has created us‡. Then, if this be so, as it is, we need not tire ourselves with seeking to comprehend the beauty of this castle, for there is between it and God the same difference as there is between the Creator and the creature. Since it is a creature, it suffices that his Majesty says, that he has made it to his own image, to understand something of the great sanctity and beauty of the soul. It is no small pity and shame, that by our own fault, we do not understand ourselves, nor realise who we are.

Would it not show great ignorance, my daughters, if a man were questioned about himself, and he did not know who he was, nor could he say who was his father or his mother, nor to what country he belonged? Then, if this would argue great stupidity, ours is greater beyond comparison, when we do not endeavour to find out who we are, except that we inhabit these bodies, and we understand but vaguely that we have souls, because we have heard that this is so, and the Faith declares it to us. But we seldom consider what we possess in this soul, or who is within it, or how great is its value, and thus we pay little heed to preserve its beauty with all care. This we bestow entirely on the rude setting, or enclosure of the castle, that is to say, on our bodies.

Let us consider then, that this castle has, as I have said, many apartments, some above, others below, and at the sides; while at the centre, in the midst of all these, is the principal room, where much secret intercourse is held between God and the soul. It is necessary to pay great attention to this comparison; perhaps by it, God willing, I shall be able

\* *S. John XIV. 2.*

† *Prov. VIII. 31.*

‡ *Gen. I. 26.*

to give you some idea of the favours he is pleased to bestow on souls, and the different kinds of favours. This I will do so far as I can, but there are so many, that it would be impossible for anyone to describe them all, how much more such a poor thing as I am. But it will be a great advantage, when the Lord shall grant you such favours, to know that they are possible, and those to whom he does not grant them, may praise him for his great loving-kindness. And just as it does us no harm to think upon heavenly things, which the blessed enjoy, but on the contrary, we rejoice, and endeavour to attain to their happiness, so neither will it injure us to see that it is possible for a God so great to communicate, even in this exile, with evil-smelling worms, and to love a bounty so kind, and a mercy that is measureless.

I am certain that whoever is scandalised to hear that it is possible for God to grant this favour here below, will be found greatly wanting in humility and neighbourly love. For, indeed, how can we fail to rejoice that God grants favours to our brother-man, since it does not hinder him from doing the same for us, and that his Majesty manifests his greatness, be it in whom it may be?

Sometimes, he has no other aim than this manifestation, as he said concerning the blind man, to whom he gave sight, when the Apostles asked him if the man's blindness were due to his sins, or to those of his parents.\* Thus then, it is not because those are more holy to whom he grants certain favours than are those to whom he refuses them, but that his greatness may be recognised, as we see in Saint Paul and the Magdalene, and that we may praise him in his creatures. It may be said that such things seem to be impossible, and it is well not to scandalise the weak, but it is a lesser evil that they should not believe in them, than that those to whom God grants them should fail to profit by them, for seeing that his power and Majesty are so great, they will be refreshed and enkindled to love him better, who shows them so much mercy. Besides, I know that I am speaking to those who are in no such danger, for they are aware and believe that God still bestows very evident tokens of his love; but those who do not believe this are not likely to experience them, because he is very pleased when we place no limit upon his works. Therefore, Sisters, let not those whom the Lord does not lead by this way, ever discredit it. Now, turning to our lovely and delightful castle, we have to see how we may enter it. I seem to be saying something foolish, because if this castle is the soul, clearly there is no question of how to enter, since they are one and the same thing, and it would seem to be crazy to tell a person to go into a room, who was already within it. But you must understand that there are many degrees of entering, and many people remain in the precincts of the castle, where the guards are, and they make no effort to pass inside, nor do they know what is in this precious place, nor who is therein, nor even what rooms it may have.

You will have already heard that some books on prayer give advice to the soul to enter into itself; now this is the same thing. A great theologian said to me not long ago, that souls who do not pray are like

\* *S. John IX. 2.*

a body that is paralysed or disabled, which, though it has feet and hands, cannot use them, and in the same way, some souls are so weak, and so much given up to exterior things, that there is no improving them, nor do they seem to be able to enter into themselves. They are so accustomed to mix with the reptiles and beasts that are round about the castle, that they have contracted their habits, and though by nature so richly endowed as to be capable of conversing with God, there is no curing them. And if these souls do not endeavour to understand, and to find a remedy for their great misery, by turning their heads to look within themselves, perhaps they may be changed into pillars of salt, like Lot's wife to whom this happened for looking behind her.\* For so far as I can understand, prayer and reflection are the gateway into this Castle. I do not say mental rather than vocal prayer, but to be prayer at all, it must be with reflection, for although the lips may be very busy, I do not call that prayer in which we do not consider with whom we are speaking, nor what we are praying for, nor who we are who pray, and to whom ; and though prayer may sometimes be without these considerations, they must have preceded it. He who is accustomed to speak to his Majesty as he would to his slave, not noticing if he speaks ill, but who says just what comes into his head, or that he has learned by heart for repetition, to my mind does not pray, and please God, that no Christian acts in this manner. I hope in his Majesty that no-one among you, Sisters, will do so, for the custom we have of speaking of interior things should be a great safeguard against falling into such frowardness.

Now we are not speaking with these disabled souls, who, if the Lord himself do not come and command them to rise, as he did to the man, who for thirty years had lain near the sacred pool,† they will be in very evil case and great danger, but with other souls, who finally enter the castle, because, though they are very much entangled with the world, they have good desires, and sometimes, though rarely, they commend themselves to the Lord, and consider what they are, though not very thoroughly. Perhaps they pray several times a month, yet with many distractions, since their minds are almost always occupied with business, and because they are so attached to it, their heart is where their treasure is. Sometimes however, they disentangle themselves, and self-knowledge shows them plainly that they are not in a good way to reach the gate. Finally, they enter the first rooms on the lower floor, but many reptiles enter with them, and they do not permit them either to see the beauty of the castle, or to find repose in it ; it is, indeed, much that they have entered at all.

It may seem to you, daughters, that this is *malapropos*, since by the goodness of the Lord, you are not among these souls. You must have patience, because without these remarks, I do not know how to make you undersand, as I do, certain interior matters of prayer. May it please the Lord that I succeed in saying something, but that which I wish to make clear to you is very difficult, unless there is experience. If you have it, you will realise that I cannot avoid touching upon certain points, which thanks be to the Lord for his mercy, do not concern us.

\* Gen. XIX. 26.      † S. John V. 5.



*Chapter II*

*The Saint describes the ugliness of a soul that is in mortal sin, and how God seeks to make a person understand something of it. She also says somewhat about self-knowledge. It is useful, because it contains several important points; she explains too, how these Mansions have to be understood.*

Before going further, I want to ask you to consider what it will be to see this Castle, so resplendent and beautiful, this oriental pearl, this live tree, which is planted in the actual living waters of Life, that is God, when the soul falls into mortal sin. There is no darkness so thick, nor anything so gloomy and black, but it is much more so. If you ask why? it suffices to know that that same Sun, which gave to the soul so much beauty and splendour, though still in its centre, is as if he were no longer there, for it to participate in him. Yet the soul has still the same capacity to enjoy his Majesty, as the crystal has to receive the sunlight into itself. But now nothing any longer profits it, and hence, all the good works it may do, being thus in mortal sin, are of no avail to bring it to glory; for not proceeding from that Principle, which is God, from whom our virtue is virtue, and having no part in him, they cannot be agreeable in his eyes.

In fact, the intention of one who commits mortal sin, is not to please him, but to give pleasure to the devil, and as he is darkness itself, the poor soul grows dark also. I know a person to whom the Lord willed to show what a soul becomes who has sinned mortally. That person said, it seemed to her a thing impossible that anyone should sin who understood it, but rather supreme efforts would be made to escape occasions of sin. She was therefore very glad whenever she saw that it was realised, and may you be inspired, daughters, to pray much to God for those who are in this state, plunged as they are in darkness, and their works as dark as themselves. For just as a spring that is very clear gives rise to waters as clear, so it is with a soul that is in a state of grace. Its works are very agreeable in the eyes of God and man, because they proceed from this Fountain of Life. The soul is as a tree planted in the midst of it, which would not have freshness and fruit, except they proceeded from that Fount, which sustains it, and keeps it from withering, and thus it produces good fruit. In the same way, the soul, which by its fault is separated from this Spring, and planted in the midst of other very black and malodorous waters, produces nothing but misery and filth.

Here it should be noted that the Spring, or that resplendent Sun, which is in the centre of the soul, does not lose its splendour and beauty, it is always within her, and nothing can destroy its loveliness. But if a black cloth be placed over a crystal that is exposed to the sun, it is clear, that though the sun be still shining, it will not have any illuminating effect upon the crystal.

O souls! redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, realise this, and take pity on yourselves! How is it possible, that understanding this, you will not endeavour to take away this black covering from the crystal?

Consider that if you were deprived of life, you would never again enjoy this Light. O Jesus ! what it is to see a soul separated from thy Light ! In what a state are the poor apartments of the castle ! How troubled are the senses, which dwell therein ! And the powers, which are the chieftains, the major-domos and masters, how blinded they are ! and how badly they govern ! How, indeed, can the tree bear good fruit, planted as it is in the devil ? I once heard a spiritual man declare that he was not surprised at any evil a person in mortal sin might commit, but rather that he did not do something worse. May God in his mercy, preserve us from so great an evil, for there is nothing in life that deserves this name except sin, which brings with it misfortunes that will never end. This, daughters, is what we have to fear, and what we have to pray to God about, for if he do not guard the city, we shall labour in vain,\* since we are but vanity itself.

That person to whom God revealed the state of a soul in mortal sin, said that she had derived two things from this vision. First, a very great fear of offending him, and therefore, seeing the danger to be so great, she was always imploring him not to allow her to fall. Secondly, a mirror of humility, revealing that no good that we possess has its principle in ourselves, but it comes from the Spring, in which the tree of our soul is planted, and from that Sun which gives life to our actions. She said that this was represented to her so clearly, that in doing any good thing, or in seeing it done, she referred it at once to its Source, for she realised that without his help, we could do nothing. Hence it followed, that she at once gave the praise to God, and, generally speaking, she had no return on herself in any good work that she might do.

The time will not be lost, Sisters, that you may spend in reading this, nor, on my side, in writing it, if these two lessons remain with us. They are well-known to the learned and understanding, but we women need instruction in everything, and so perhaps the Lord wishes that metaphors such as these should be brought to our notice, and may it please his loving-kindness to give us the grace to profit by them.

These interior things are so obscure, that anyone knowing so little as I do, must perforce say much that is superfluous and even foolish, in order to hit the mark. Patience is necessary in reading what I write, as I have to describe what I do not well understand, and indeed, I sometimes take the paper, and, like a simpleton, I do not know what to say, nor how to begin. Still, I know very well that it is of importance to you that I should explain some interior matters as clearly as I can, for we constantly hear how good it is to pray, and our Constitutions prescribe so many hours of prayer, but we are only told what we can do for ourselves, and little is told us of what the Lord works in the soul, I mean, supernatural prayer. When then, we are told something of these things, we feel a lively consolation in considering this heavenly interior edifice, so little understood of mortals, though many are seeking after it. In my other writings, the Lord has thrown some light on the subject, yet I realise that I did not understand then as I do now, certain among the more difficult interior

\* *Ps. CXXVI. 1.*



matters. The tedious thing is, that in order to arrive at them, I am obliged to speak of many things already well-known, and with my untrained mind, I cannot do otherwise.

Now let us turn to our interior castle of many mansions. You must not think of these apartments as being placed one after the other, as things in a row, but fix your eyes on the centre, which is the dwelling or palace where the King is, and consider how a palmito tree has many layers of bark, which surround the savoury pith, and must be removed before it can be eaten. Thus, this palace has around it many rooms, and the same above, because the things of the soul have to be considered in their fulness, breadth, and grandeur, without fear of exaggeration, because the soul's capacity is greater than we can imagine, and in its every part the light of that Sun, which is within the palace, is diffused. It is of the utmost importance to every soul that is given to prayer, whether little or much, that she should be neither restricted nor constrained. Let her pass freely through these mansions, above, below and round about, since God has bestowed upon her a great dignity ; do not oblige her to remain a long time in one room only, even in that of self-knowledge. Yet note how necessary this self-knowledge is, for even the souls whom the Lord has brought into the same mansion with himself, exalted though it be, must never lose sight of their own misery, nor could they if they would, for humility will always be at work, like the bee making honey in the hive, and without this, everything is lost. But we should reflect that the bee does not neglect to sally forth, and fly among the flowers, and thus the soul should do in gaining self-knowledge ; believe me, she should fly away sometimes to consider the grandeur and the majesty of her God. In his presence she will discover her own misery better than within herself, and she will be less hindered by the reptiles, which enter the first apartments, where self-knowledge is gained. For though as I have said, a great grace from God is exercised in this, still, as we say, the lesser is contained in the greater. Believe me, we shall attain to a higher virtue in contemplating the goodness of God, than in fixing our eyes solely on our own misery. I do not know whether I have made this clear, but the knowledge of ourselves is so important, that I do not wish you ever to neglect it, however lofty your contemplation may be, since while we are in this world, there is nothing that matters so much to us as humility.

Therefore, I repeat, that it is very good, and again very good, to endeavour first to enter the mansion where this is the chief concern, rather than to fly onwards to the others, because this is the way, and why should we wish for wings to fly, when we can walk along a safe and smooth road? Rather let us seek to benefit more by this. But to my thinking, we never succeed in knowing ourselves, if we do not endeavour to know God ; beholding his greatness we appreciate our littleness, and beholding His purity, we shall see our stains ; considering His humility, we shall realise how far we are from being humble. There are two advantages in this. The first is, that a white object appears much whiter beside a black one, and *vice versa*, a black object appears much blacker beside a white one. The second is, that our understanding and our will are ennobled, and better disposed towards every good work, when we are gazing by turns at

God and at ourselves, for it is very bad for us, if we never emerge from the slough of our own miseries. We say of those who are in mortal sin, that their deeds are dark and noisome, and though these souls are not as those, God forbid, yet there is this similarity, that if we are always plunged in the misery of our earthliness, our ways will never be freed from the imperfection of fears, pusillanimity and cowardice. I shall be wondering whether others are regarding me or not ; if going by this road will be disadvantageous to me ; if I dare commence such and such a work, and if it will be pride in me to do so ; if it is well that such a miserable thing as I should treat of such a lofty subject as prayer ; shall I not be held to be better than I am, if I do not follow the common way ? extremes are not good, even in the practice of virtue, and as I am such a sinner, I may only fall from a higher place, and then I shall scandalise the good. Such an one as I am has no need of a singular devotion. God bless me! daughters, what great loss the devil must have caused to many souls by such ideas! for all this seems to them to be humility, with many more things of the kind than I can say, and it all comes of not understanding ourselves. Our self-knowledge is distorted, and if we never leave ourselves, I am not astonished that this and worse is to be feared. This is why I say, daughters, that we should fix our eyes on Christ, our Good, and on his Saints, for from them we shall learn true humility, and our minds will be ennobled, as I have said, and our self-knowledge will not be mean and cowardly, for though this is the first mansion, it is very rich, and of such great price, that if the soul escapes the reptiles that are in it, she will not fail to make further progress. Terrible are the artifices and snares of the devil, by which he hinders souls from knowing themselves, and understanding the way to follow!

I shall be able to give you, from my own experience, much information regarding these first mansions. You must not think of the rooms as few, but as a million, for souls have many modes of entering in one and all with good intent. But since the devil has such an evil will, he is bound to have in each mansion legions of demons to prevent souls from passing from one to another, and as the poor soul does not realise this, he deceives her by a thousand means.

He cannot so well deceive those who are nearer to the King, but here, as the wayfarers are still drunk with the world, engulfed in its satisfactions, and swollen with pride in its honours and pretensions, the senses and powers which are the vassals of the soul, have not the strength which God gave them by nature, and though filled with the desire not to offend God, and doing good works, these souls are easily overcome.

Those who find themselves in this plight need to have recourse as often as they can to his Majesty, and to take his blessed Mother and his Saints as intercessors, that they may fight for them, since their servants have so little strength to defend them. In truth, in all these states we need strength from God. May his Majesty in his mercy, bestow it upon us! Amen. How miserable is the life in which we live! Since I have spoken much elsewhere on the danger we run in not being well-grounded in humility and self-knowledge, although they are more important for us than anything else, I will not say more about them here, and may it please

the Lord that I have said something that will help you.

You must notice that the light which comes from the palace where the King is, is scarcely perceived in these first mansions, for though they are not obscure and black as when the soul is in sin, still there is a certain darkness, so that she cannot see him who is there. I do not know how to explain myself, for it is not the fault of the apartment, but because of so many evil things, snakes, vipers, and noisome creatures, which have entered with the soul, and which prevent it from seeing the Light. It is as if a man should enter a place filled with sunshine, but he has so much dust in his eyes, that he can scarcely open them. The room is bright, but he cannot enjoy the brightness, because of the impediment in his eyes, or because of these wild and noisome creatures, which make him close his eyes so as not to see them. It seems to me that thus it must be with a soul, which though not in evil case, is immersed in worldly things, and so absorbed in riches, or honours or business, as I have said, that though it does in fact desire to see and enjoy the Light, these things do not permit it to do so, nor does it seem able to free itself from these numerous obstacles. It is, therefore, very desirable that it should enter the second mansions, where an endeavour is made to give the go-by to unnecessary ties and business, each one according to the state in life. This is a thing of so much importance in reaching the principal mansion, that if we do not begin to do it, I hold progress to be impossible, or even to remain where we are, without much danger, though we are within the castle, because in the midst of such poisonous creatures, sooner or later, it will be impossible to escape being bitten.

Then, what would it mean to us, daughters, if, being free as we are from these hindrances, and already having entered much farther within the other secret mansions of the castle, we, by our own fault, returned to those pitfalls, as, for our sins, many persons must do, to whom God has shown favours, and who have wilfully fallen into this misery. Here we are exteriorly free! may it please the Lord that we be so interiorly, and that he will keep us free. Guard yourselves, my daughters, from extraneous cares. Note that in very few of these mansions do the demons cease their assaults. It is true that in some, the guards, which, as I believe I have said, are the powers, have sufficient force to fight, but it is very necessary to be always on the watch against the stratagems of the evil one, and not to let him deceive us, when he assumes the guise of an angel of light. There are a multitude of things by which, insinuating himself little by little, he can injure us, and we do not realise it until the evil is done.

I have already said that he is like a muffled file,\* and we need to be warned against him from the first. I will say something to make you grasp this truth better. He may inspire a Sister with a desire to do various penances, and she never seems to be at rest unless she is tormenting herself. The principle is good, but if the Prioress has ordered that no one may do penance without permission, the devil suggests that in a thing so excellent, she may venture, and secretly, he leads her such a life that she

\* *Life*, chap. XXXI. 23.



loses her health, and cannot do what the Rule commands ; so you see how this kind of goodness ends!

In another Sister, he inspires zeal for a high perfection. This too, is very good, but it may come about that any little fault of the Sisters will appear to her as a serious infraction, and she will watch to see what they are doing, and then run to tell the Prioress ; and sometimes, it may even be that she will not see her own faults, in her great zeal for observance. As the others do not understand what is in her mind, and they see that she is watching them, they may not take it in good part. What the devil is after here is not a little thing, for it is to cool charity and the love of one another, which is to do great harm. Know, my daughters, that true perfection consists in the love of God and of our neighbour, and when we keep these commandments with greater perfection, we shall be more perfect. Our whole Rule and Constitutions are nothing else but a means of keeping them more perfectly. Beware of indiscreet zeal, which can do us serious injury ; let each one watch over herself. Since elsewhere, I have said so much about this,\* I will not add more. This love of one another is so important, that I never wish it to be forgotten. If you go about remarking in others little nothings, which often are not even imperfections, but perhaps, in your ignorance, you take them amiss, you will lose your own peace of mind, and trouble that of others. See how dearly such perfection may cost you! The devil may also offer this temptation with regard to the Prioress, and this is more dangerous. Great discretion is necessary in this case, for if it is a question of things contrary to the Rule and Constitutions, they should not always be overlooked. She should be warned, and if she do not amend, the Superior should be told; for this is charity. The same applies to the Sisters, when the matter is grave, and to neglect this for fear that it may be a temptation, is itself a temptation. But so that the devil do not deceive us, be strictly warned not to mention such things to one another, for from this the evil one may gain much advantage, and a custom of murmuring may arise, if we speak to anyone, as I have said, except to one who has power to remedy the matter. Here, glory be to God, these remarks scarcely apply, as such continuous silence is observed ; but it is well to be always on our guard.

\* *Life. Chap. XIII.*

## SECOND MANSIONS

*The sole Chapter*

*The Saint speaks of the great need of perseverance, in order to reach the succeeding Mansions, and the strong opposition offered by the devil; also the care that must be taken, if we are to enter them, not to wander from the way; she suggests a mode of action that she has proved to be very helpful.*

Now let us go on to consider what kind of souls those are who enter the second mansions, and what they do there. I wish to speak briefly, because I have written about this at some length elsewhere,\* and it will be impossible to avoid repetition further on, because I do not recollect what I have said. But if it were otherwise, I know well that it would not be tedious to you, for we never tire of books, however many, which treat of this subject.

This, then, concerns those who have already begun to pray, and who understand how important it is not to remain in the first mansions. But very often they have not sufficient determination to leave them, for they do not avoid occasions of sin, and this is their great danger. Yet by the great mercy of God, some few do contrive to escape from the snakes and other venomous creatures, and they understand that it is well to leave them. These souls have, in some ways, far more trials than the first, but they are not in so much danger, because they seem to realise its presence, and therefore there is great hope that they will penetrate farther into the castle. I say that they have more trials, because those who are in the first mansions are as if they were dumb, but also, they do not hear, so it is not such a trial to be unable to speak, while those who hear and cannot speak suffer much more. Yet this is not a reason for desiring to be able to speak rather than to be able to hear, for after all, it is something to understand what is said to us. Now those who are in the second mansions hear the calls addressed to them by our Lord, because they are nearer to his Majesty, and he is a very good neighbour, so merciful and kind. Even engaged as we are with our pastimes and business, and the satisfactions and deceits of the world, and even falling into sin and picking ourselves up again,—because these creatures are so poisonous, and their presence so dangerous and noisy, that it is a marvel if we escape tripping and falling,—yet with all this our Lord is so pleased that we love him and seek his company, that sooner or later, he does not fail to call us to come nearer to himself. And it is this so sweet Voice which grieves the poor soul, because it is unable to do immediately what is commanded, and thus as I said, it suffers more than if it did not hear. I do not say that these voices and calls are such as those I have yet to speak of, but they are words spoken by good people, or heard in sermons, or read in good books ; and by similar means that you know of, God calls us, as also by

\* *Life. Chaps. XI-XIII.*

illness, and trials, and by truths that he teaches us in moments of prayer, which, no matter how careless, he greatly values.

As for you, Sisters, do not think lightly of this first grace, nor be too disconsolate that you have not at once responded to our Lord, for his Majesty knows well how to wait many days and years, especially when he sees perseverance and good desires. These are very necessary here, because with them the soul does not cease to advance. But the opposition offered by the demons in all kinds of ways is terrible at this point, and causes her more pain than in the past, for then she was dumb and deaf, at least she heard very little, and offered less resistance, as one who has almost lost the hope of victory.

Now the intelligence is more alert, and the powers more capable, and the blows and fusillade are such that the soul cannot help hearing them. For it is here that the demons portray to her those reptiles, the things of the world, and they make its satisfactions appear to be almost eternal ; they represent the esteem in which she is held by friends and relations, and how health may be ruined by penances (for the souls who enter this mansion always begin to wish to do something in this way), and a thousand other kinds of obstacles. O Jesus! what an uproar the demons make, and how great are the afflictions of the poor soul! She does not know whether to press on, or to return to the first apartment. Against this latter course, reason represents the folly of imagining that the world and all that is in it is worth anything at all in comparison with what she aspires to ; faith teaches her what will fulfil her aspirations ; memory reminds her of the end of all earthly things, and the death that awaits those who give themselves to the enjoyment of these visible things ; how suddenly some are removed, and how soon they are forgotten by everybody ; how others, who have been seen in great prosperity, have been laid underground, and passing by their graves, the thought occurs that many worms are now seething in their bodies : and many other things the memory may conjure up. The will now inclines her to love One in whom she beholds so many perfections and tokens of love, and she longs to make some return ; what attracts her most of all is that this true Lover never leaves her, but accompanies her, and gives her life and being. Then the understanding comes in to make her realise, that though she may live for many years, she will not be able to find a better friend ; that the whole world is full of falsehood, and the satisfactions placed before her by the demon are fraught with troubles, cares and contradictions. It suggests that certainly outside this castle there is neither safety nor peace, and that she should give up going into strange houses, since her own is so full of good things, if she cares to enjoy them. Then, who is there who finds as this soul does, all that she needs in her own home, especially having such a Guest as she has, who will make her the possessor of all good things, if she will not go astray, like the prodigal son, who was reduced to eating the food of swine? This is the reasoning by which to overcome the demons. But, O Lord, my God! how the habit of giving way to vanities, and adopting worldly standards render it all valueless! Faith is so deadened, that we prefer what we see to what it teaches us. Yes, truly, we behold nothing but misfortune in those who run after these



visible things, yet by our commerce with them we are poisoned, like a man who is bitten by a viper, and is thoroughly poisoned and swells up. It is the same with us ; we are not on our guard, and clearly, much will be required to restore us to health ; indeed, it will be an immense grace from God if we do not die of the poison. Certainly, the soul passes through great conflict here, especially if the demon sees that she is of a disposition of character and habits to incline her to make good progress. All hell will combine to force her to leave the castle. Ah, my Lord! how necessary now is thine assistance, for without it, nothing can be done. In thy mercy, do not permit that this soul be persuaded to abandon her enterprise. Give her light to see that her whole welfare is at stake, and that she should shun bad companions ; that so much depends on conversing with those who have the same aims as her own ; that she should ally herself not only with those whom she finds in the same mansion where she is, but also with those whom she knows to be within the mansions nearer (to the King), because this will be a great help to her, and through this converse, she may be borne along with them. But she must always be on her guard against allowing herself to be overcome by the devil, because if he sees in her a great determination rather to lose her life, and her repose, and all that he offers her, than to return to the first mansion, he will leave her much sooner. Be manful, and not like those who threw themselves down to drink from the stream, when they were going into battle, I do not remember with whom\*, but she should make up her mind that she is about to fight against all the demons, and that there are no better arms than those of the Cross.

Though I have said this before, I am repeating it, because it is so important, and it is, that we should not expect, in the beginning, to meet with delights, for this is a very unworthy manner of commencing to build such a great and precious edifice,† and if it be begun on the sand, the whole will tumble down: annoyances and temptations will be endless, for these are not the mansions where the manna falls. Those are farther on, where everything tastes according to the soul's desire, because she desires nothing but what God wills.

It is a nice thing, that when we are still in a thousand entanglements and imperfections, and with so little virtue that we do not know how to make a step forward, because it is but just commencing to be born in us, and please God, it has commenced, we are not ashamed to wish for delights in prayer, and to complain of aridities! May this never be the case with you, Sisters! Take upon your shoulders the Cross that your Spouse bore on his, and realise that this ought to be your ambition ; let her who is best able to suffer, do so for his sake, and she will be the most fortunate. The rest, as an accessory, if the Lord grant, give him heartfelt thanks for it. It will seem to you, perhaps, that you are resolved to suffer exterior trials, so long as God gives you interior consolations, but his Majesty knows what is good for us ; it is not for us to advise him what he shall give us, for he could rightly say that we do not know what we ask for.

\* *Judges VII. 6.* † *Way of Perfection. Ch. XXX: "There is no building so beautiful as a pure soul adorned with virtues."*

The whole aim of one who is beginning to pray, and do not forget this, for it is very important, must be to work and resolve and dispose herself with the utmost diligence to conform her will with the will of God, and as I shall show you later, be very sure that in this lies the greatest perfection which can be attained in the spiritual life.

She who is most perfect in this will receive most from our Lord, and will be the most advanced in the way of perfection ; do not imagine that this perfection is a matter of Arabic, or of anything unknown and mysterious, for in this one thing all our goodness consists. But if we are so mistaken in the beginning as to wish that our Lord should do our will, and that he should lead us according to our ideas, what stability can there ever be in this spiritual edifice? Let us do what lies in our power, and guard ourselves against these poisonous reptiles, but very often the Lord wills that evil thoughts and aridities should persecute and afflict us, without our being able to rid ourselves of them, and sometimes he even allows the reptiles to bite us, so that we may know how to protect ourselves better in future, and to prove whether we are truly sorry for having offended him.

Therefore, if you fall sometimes, you must not be discouraged, nor slacken your efforts to make progress, for God can extract good even from these falls, just as a man does who is selling an antidote, and to prove that it is good, he swallows poison before taking it. When we do not otherwise realise our misery, and the harm that dissipation works in us, the very struggle that we are obliged to make to recollect ourselves ought to suffice. Can there be any greater evil than not to find ourselves in our own house? What hope can we have of obtaining repose elsewhere, when we cannot rest at home? But how our great and true friends and relatives, with whom, whether we will or no, we have to live, I mean to say our powers, seem to strive against us, as if conscious of the harm that our vices have wrought in them! Peace, peace, my sisters, this is what the Lord says to you, and thus he often admonished his Apostles, for believe me, if we are not at peace, and we do not seek for peace within ourselves, we shall not find it outside. Put an end to this warfare, by the Blood which was shed for us! I beg those to enter into themselves who have not yet begun to do so, and those who have made a beginning, to let nothing avail to persuade them to turn back. Remember that a relapse is worse than a fall ; and seeing what a disaster this would be, place all your confidence in the mercy of God, and not in yourselves, and you will see how his Majesty will lead you from one mansion to another, and will bring you into a land where these wild beasts will neither touch nor annoy you. He will subject them all to you, and you will mock them, and you will enjoy, even in this life, I tell you, a good beyond all that you can desire. Since, as I said at the beginning, I have already written about what you ought to do in these troubles that the devil stirs up, and that you should not seek to recollect yourselves as it were by force of arms,\* but gently, so as to make your collection continuous, I will not say more here, except to remark that it seems to me to be very helpful to speak with experienced

\* *Way of Perfection, ch. XXXIII.*

persons. You may think, for instance, that you will suffer loss in performing necessary duties, but this should not mean abandoning your recollection, and the Lord will turn everything to good, even though you may not find anyone to give you counsel. But if recollection be given up, there is no remedy but to begin again, otherwise the soul will, little by little, each day lose something more, and please God, this may be realised in time. Some of you may think, that if it is such a bad thing to turn back, it may be better not to begin, but to remain outside the castle. I have already said from the first, and our Lord has declared, that "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it,"\* and the door by which to enter this castle is prayer. Then to think that we can enter heaven, and not enter into ourselves, to know ourselves, and to consider our misery, and what we owe to God, and frequently to beg his mercy, is folly. Our Lord himself says: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me."† (I do not know whether these are the exact words, but I believe so), and: "He who seeth Me, seeth the Father also."‡

Now if we never contemplate him, and consider what we owe him, and the death that he underwent for our sakes, I do not see how we can know him, or do any acceptable work in his service. What is faith without works? and of what value are our works, if not united with the merits of Jesus Christ, our Good? If we do not think of him, then who will incite us to love this Lord? May his Majesty be pleased to make us realise how much we have cost him, and that "the servant is not above his Lord"§

We need to work if we wish to share his glory, and this is why prayer is necessary, if we are not to be always in temptation. §§

\* *Eccles III, 27.*    † *S. John, XIV. 6.*    ‡ *S. John, XIV, 9.*  
§ *S. Matthew, X, 24.*    §§ *S. Matthew, XXXI, 41.*

## THIRD MANSIONS

*Chapter I*

*Speaks of the small security that can be ours while we live in this exile, however exalted our estate may be, and advises us to walk in fear. It contains some helpful counsel.*

To those who, by the mercy of God, have obtained the victory in the previous combats, and by their perseverance have entered the third mansions, what shall we say but: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord"?\* His Majesty has done me no small favour in just now making me understand the sense of this verse in Castilian, about which I was uncertain. Truly, we may rightly call such a man blessed, for if he do not turn back, so far as we can see, he is in the safe way of salvation. Now you see, Sisters, how important it has been to win the past battles, for I am convinced that the Lord never fails to give to these victorious souls security of conscience, and this is no small good. I say 'security,' and I am wrong, for in this life there is none, and so you must always understand, that I mean provided that they do not go back on their traces. How great a misery it is to live a life in which we must always be as those who have enemies at the door, who can neither sleep nor eat unarmed, nor without dread that some breach may be made in their fortress. O my dearest Lord! how shouldest thou wish that we prize such a miserable existence? It would be impossible to desist from wishing and beseeching thee to deprive us of it, if we had not the hope of losing it for thy sake, or of spending it uniquely in thy service, and if we did not realise that it is thy will for us. If it be so, my God, then let us die with thee,† as Saint Thomas said, for to live without thee, and with the constant fear of losing thee for ever, is nothing better than to die over and over again.

This is why I say, daughters, that the blessing we must ask for, is to be in safety with the blessed, for with these fears, how can anyone be contented whose whole contentment lies in pleasing God? Recollect that some saints have had these and much loftier desires, and yet they fell into grave sins, and we cannot be sure that God will put forth his hand to save us, so that we may do penance for our faults, as they did.

I assure you, my daughters, that I am so filled with fear in writing this, that I scarcely know how to write it, nor how I live, when I remember it, as I frequently do. Beg his Majesty, my daughters, always to live in me, for without this, what security can there be for one whose life has been so ill-spent as mine? And do not be distressed when you realise that this is so, as sometimes I have seen you to be, when I have spoken thus. It comes of your wish that I had been really holy, and you are right,—I wish it myself,—but what can I do, now that I have failed, and solely by my own fault? I cannot complain of God, that he did not afford me the help that I needed to fulfil your desires. No, and I cannot write this

\* *Ps. CXI, 1.* † *S. John, XI, 16.*



without tears and great confusion, seeing that I am writing for those who could teach me. It is an obedience hard to fulfil! May it please the Lord, that since it is done for him, it may be of some use to you, and beg him to pardon the presumption of this miserable creature.

Yet his Majesty knows full well that I presume only on his mercy, and since I cannot alter what I have been, I have no other remedy than to have recourse to him, and to trust in the merits of his Son, and of the Virgin, his Mother, whose Habit, unworthily, I wear, as you do yourselves. Praise him, my daughters, that you are verily the daughters of this Queen, and thus, since you have so good a Mother, you have no need to blush for my wickedness. Imitate her, and consider what must be the grandeur of our Lady, and what a privilege it is to have her as your patron, for my sins and my being what I am, have not sufficed to tarnish in any way the lustre of our holy Order. But one thing I advise you, and that is not to place your safety in this privilege, nor in having such a Mother, for David was very holy, and yet you know what Solomon became. Neither count on the seclusion and penance in which you live, nor on your frequent converse about God, nor on your constant exercise of prayer, nor your retirement from worldly affairs, and your holding them in abhorrence, as you believe you do. All this is good, but it is not enough, as I have said, to justify us in ceasing to fear. Therefore, keep this verse in mind, and often recall it to your memory: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord."

Now, I do not know what I was saying, for I have digressed so much, and remembering what I have been, my wings are clipped, and I cannot go on to speak of higher things. I will therefore leave this subject for the present, and return to what I commenced to say to you, about the souls who have entered the third mansions, for the Lord has done them no slight favour, but rather a very great one, in helping them to overcome the first difficulties. By the goodness of God, I believe that there are many such souls in the world. They are very desirous not to offend his Majesty, they keep themselves even from venial sin; they practise penance; they are faithful to their hours of recollection; they spend their time well; they devote themselves to works of charity, and they are very discreet in their conversation, manner of dress and in the management of their households, when they have them. Certainly their state is to be envied, and there seems to be no reason why they should be denied entrance even to the inmost mansion, nor will the Lord deny it, if they are desirous of entering, for this is an excellent disposition to win from him every kind of grace.

O Jesus! who among us will say that she does not desire so great a good, especially when she has now left the worst troubles behind? Surely not one of us. We all say that we desire it, but something more is still necessary, if the Lord is to possess our souls entirely. It is not enough to say that we wish it, any more than it was enough for the young man, to whom the Lord explained what he must do to be perfect.\* Since I have begun to speak of these mansions, this young man has been constantly

\* *S. Matth. XIX, 21.*

in my mind, for we are precisely like him, and it is one of the principal causes of aridity in prayer, though there may be other causes as well.

I am not speaking of those intolerable, interior trials, which many good souls suffer, and without any fault of their own, and from which the Lord delivers them, with much profit to themselves ; nor of those who suffer from melancholy or other weaknesses. We must not discuss the judgments of God in any matter. For my part, then, I hold that the most usual cause of dryness is what I have indicated. The souls who suffer thus are conscious that they would not on any account commit a mortal sin, and many would not wilfully commit a venial sin ; they spend their time and their wealth to good advantage, and in consequence, they cannot bear with patience that the door into the King's palace should be closed against them, for they believe themselves to be his servants, and indeed, they are. But though an earthly king may have many servants, they are not all admitted to his chamber.

Enter, enter, my daughters, into your own interior ; look beyond your little works, which as Christians you ought to accomplish, and much more besides, and let it be enough for you that you are the servants of God. Do not expect too much, or you will be left with nothing. Consider the Saints, who have entered the chamber of the King, and see what a difference there is between them and ourselves. Do not ask for what you have not deserved, nor should it ever enter our minds, since we have offended God, that because of any service we may have rendered, we have merited such a favour. O humility, humility! I do not know how it is, but I am always tempted to think, that whoever suffers much from aridity is somewhat lacking in this virtue. I repeat that I am not concerned here with the great interior trials that I have mentioned, for they are much more afflictive than a mere want of devotion.

Let us prove ourselves, my Sisters, or rather let the Lord prove us, for he knows best how to do it, though we will not always admit this, and now, let us go on to speak of those souls that are really well-adjusted, and see what they do for God, and then we shall discover whether we are right in complaining of his Majesty. If, when he tells us what to do in order to be perfect, we turn our backs and go away sad, like the young man in the Gospel, what do you expect his Majesty to do, since he has to reward us according to the love that we have for him?

This love, daughters, must not be merely the stuff of our imagination, it must be proved by works. Nevertheless, the Lord has no need of our works, but he looks for the resolution of our will. It may seem to us, that when we have put on, and put on willingly, the religious Habit, and we have abandoned the things of the world and all that we had, for God's sake, (though it be but the nets of Saint Peter,\* for in his sight, he gives all who gives what he has), we have then done all that has to be done. This is certainly a good beginning, if we persevere in it, and we do not turn back, and associate again with the reptiles in the first rooms, even in desire. There is no doubt, that if we continue in this total denudation and deprivation, that we shall reach our goal. But this is on one other condi-

\* *S. Matth. IV, 20.*



tion, and mark my advice to you on this point: we must always look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants,\* as Saint Paul or Christ said, recognising that our Lord is not obliged to accord us the favour we have been considering; on the contrary, as those who have received more, we remain the more indebted.

What can we do for such a generous God, who died for us, who created us, and gave us being? Should we not think ourselves happy in being able to repay him, in some small measure, what we owe him for the services he has rendered us, (I dislike this word, but it is true that he has done nothing but serve us, during the whole time that he lived on earth), without asking of him fresh favours and privileges?

Consider well, daughters, some of the things here emphasised, though somewhat confusedly, for I do not know how to explain better. The Lord will make you understand them, so that you will derive humility from dryness, and not that disquietude that the devil seeks to inspire, and believe me, that where there is true humility, though God may grant no favours, there will be peace and conformity with his will, so that you will be more satisfied than others are with consolations. Very often, as you have read, his divine Majesty gives these to the weakest souls, who, I suppose, would not exchange them for the strength they have who continue in aridity. We are more fond of consolations than of the Cross. Do thou prove us, Lord, who knowest the truth, so that we may learn to know ourselves.

## Chapter II

*The Saint continues the same subject; she speaks of aridity in prayer, and its results; of the necessity of proving ourselves, and of how God proves those who are in these Mansions.*

I know some souls, and I believe I can even say many, who have reached this state, and have lived for long years a regular and well-ordered life of soul and body, so far as can be seen and learned from them, for they appear to have overcome the world, or at least to be disillusioned about it, and yet when his Majesty tries them, even in matters of small importance, they are so troubled and downhearted, that they cause me much astonishment, and even fear. Advice is useless, because having professed to practise virtue for so long, they think themselves capable of teaching others, and that they are quite right in resenting such trials. Indeed, I have found it impossible to help such persons, or to console them except by showing great sympathy with them, and truly, one feels it, at seeing them so unhappy. Neither will they bear contradiction, because they are quite persuaded in their own minds that they are suffering for God, and so nothing will make them see their imperfection. This is another snare for advanced souls. That they feel trials is not

\* *S. Luke XVII, 10.*

surprising, but to my thinking, the pain felt over such things should pass away very soon. God very often wishes to make his elect realise their own misery, and so he withdraws his favours for a time, and nothing more is needed, for they see at once what they are, and realise, afterwards, what God intended by the trial.

Their faults stand out more clearly, and sometimes it gives them more pain to see how sensitive they are to worldly trials, of little consequence in comparison with God's proving. I consider that this is a great mercy on the part of God, for though they were at fault, they gain greatly in humility.

It is not thus with the persons I have described. They look upon their sufferings as signs of saintliness, and they wish others to regard them in the same light. I intend to say something further about them, for it will help us to understand ourselves, and to prove ourselves, without waiting to be proved by the Lord, for it is a very great thing to be fore-warned, and to have understood ourselves beforehand.

A rich man who has no son, nor anyone to whom he cares to leave his heritage, suffers a heavy loss. It is not, however, such that there does not still remain to him sufficient for himself and for his household, with something over. If he now display as much anxiety and distress as if there were no longer left to him bread to eat, how can our Lord ask him to leave all for his sake? He will probably say that he feels the loss, because he wished to have something to give to the poor. But I believe that God prefers, to this kind of charity, that I should resign myself to his Majesty's action, and while trying to recover my possessions, I should keep my soul in peace. If the man does not act thus, because the Lord has not yet raised him to this degree of virtue, well and good, but he should realise that he is wanting in liberty of spirit, and should dispose himself to receive it from the Lord, as he will do, if he asks it of him.

Another person has more than enough to live on ; he has an opportunity of increasing his wealth ; to take it when it is offered, that is one thing, let it pass ; but if he should seek it, and then persevere to add more and more to his possessions, however good his intentions may be, as they ought to be, for I am speaking of persons who are prayerful and virtuous, let there be no fear that he will ever go up into the mansions that are nearest to the King. In the same way, when some people receive a slight, or some reflection on their honour, though God often gives the grace to bear it well exteriorly, since he likes to see virtue practised in public, and so that the esteem in which they are held be not diminished, as also to recompense them for services rendered,—so good is our Lord,—yet they remain in a certain disquiet, which, do what they will, they cannot immediately overcome. God bless me! these very persons have meditated long on the sufferings of our Lord, on the worth of suffering, and they have even desired it! They wish that everyone led such well-regulated lives as their own, and please God they do not think that the pain they feel is the fault of their neighbour, and make a merit of it in their own minds!

You will think, Sisters, that I am speaking irrevelantly, and not to yourselves, because such things do not happen here, where we have no

possessions, nor do we wish for them, nor seek them ; nor is there anyone here to wrong us. These examples may not be exactly appropriate, but you can apply their teaching to many other likely occasions, which it would not be well to specify here, nor is there need to do so. From them you can learn whether you are really detached from the things you have left, for trivial tests present themselves, by which, even if they are not of the same kind, you can very well prove and make discovery whether or no you have mastered your passions. And believe me, it is not a question of wearing the religious Habit or not, but of striving to practise virtue, and to submit our will to God's will in everything ; in persevering to regulate our lives according to what his Majesty has ordained for them, and in not desiring the accomplishment of our own will, but of his.\*

If we have not yet attained to this, let us be humble, for humility is the ointment for our wounds, and if it be truly ours, though He may delay somewhat, the Physician, who is God, will come to heal us.

The penances undertaken by such people (as I have described), are as well regulated as their lives, to which they cling, as a means of serving God,—and all this is not wrong. But they are very discreet in their penances, lest they should injure their health. Have no fear that they will kill themselves ; they are too well-balanced ! Their love is not such as to deprive them of reason, but I prefer not to keep it, if we are to be satisfied with this manner of serving God, always going at a snail's pace, which will never bring us to the end of this road. They seem to themselves to be always moving, and they grow tired ; for as you may think, it is a wearisome road ; it will be a great mercy if they are not lost. But does it seem to you, daughters, that if we were going from one country to another, and we could reach it in eight days, that it would be well to take a year to do so, risking winds and snows, floods and bad roads ? Would it not be better to get the journey over at once ? for besides all these, there is the danger of serpents. Oh, what good reasons I could give you for this advice ! Please God, I have passed beyond this stage, but very often it seems to me that I have not. When we go with so much caution, everything opposes us, because we are afraid of everything, and so we do not dare to press on. As if we ourselves could ever reach those mansions, while others breast the road for us ! Since this is impossible, let us exert ourselves, my Sisters, let us leave our reason and our fears in God's hands ; let us forget natural weakness, for it can greatly preoccupy us. Leave the care of your bodies to the Superiors, whose charge it is ; our sole care should be to travel speedily to see our Lord, for though we have little or no indulgence here, anxiety about our health may lead us astray. What is more, it will be none the better for it,† as I know, and I also know that what concerns the body is of the least importance, and that for the journey I speak of, what is needed is a deep humility. If you have followed me, here we touch, I think, what is lacking in those who do not make good progress.

As for ourselves, let us think that we have taken but a very few steps, and believe that this is so, while our sisters appear to be hastening along,

\* *St. Luke XXII, 42.*

† *Way of Perfection, chap. XII.*



and let each of us not only desire, but seek to ensure, that others regard us as the most imperfect of all. With this we shall be in a most excellent disposition to advance, but otherwise, we shall stay where we are all our lives, in a thousand troubles and miseries, because, since we shall not have got rid of ourselves, it will be heavy and difficult going, loaded as we shall be with the weight of miseries from which they are free who ascend to the mansions that are beyond.

In these third mansions, the Lord does not fail to reward with justice and even with mercy, for he always gives far more than we deserve, and much greater satisfaction than is to be found in the pleasures and distractions of the world. But I do not think he grants many delights, unless it were to entice us by an experience of what takes place in the inner mansions, to dispose ourselves to enter them. It may seem to you that satisfactions and delights are one and the same thing, and wherefore do I make any distinction between them? But to me the difference appears to be very great, though I may be mistaken. I will explain myself more fully when we arrive at the fourth mansions, where it will be more appropriate, as I shall have to describe some of the favours that our Lord grants at that stage. Though it may seem to be unnecessary, it may be of some use, because when you know what each mansion contains, you will strive to reach the highest. It will also be very helpful to those souls whom God is guiding there, and confusion to those who think that they have everything already, but if they are humble, they will be moved to thanksgiving. If, however, there is any lack of humility, they may cause them an interior despondency, which is unreasonable, for perfection does not consist in consolations, but in a deeper love, and we shall be rewarded for this, and for the greater justice and sincerity of our actions.

If this be true, as it is, your may ask, to what purpose then is it to describe these interior graces, and to explain them? I do not know, ask him who has commanded me to write, for I am not obliged, nor would it be well, to dispute with the Superiors, but to obey them. What I can say with truth is, that when I had not received, and I knew nothing of such favours by experience, nor expected to know them in my whole life, (and justly so, for it would have been a great consolation at that time to know, or even to conjecture, that I was pleasing to God in any way), when I read about these favours in books, and about the consolations that the Lord bestows on those who serve him, it gave me the greatest joy, and it was the occasion of my soul giving praise to God. Then if I, who am so wicked, have done thus, those who are good and humble will praise him much more, and if only one soul shall praise him just once, it is well that I should speak according to my ability, and that we understand what happiness and joy we miss by our own fault.

More than this, when favours come from God, they come laden with love and strength, so that we journey on without toil, and continue to grow in good works and virtue. Do not think that it is of little importance whether or no we dispose ourselves to receive such graces. When we are not at fault, his Majesty, who is a just Lord, will give us in other ways, best known to himself,—for his secrets are mysterious,—what he has deprived us of here, and without the slightest doubt, it will be, at any rate,

what is best suited to us.

It seems to me, that what will most help those who, by the goodness of the Lord, have reached these mansions (and he has done them no small favour, for they are well placed to advance farther), is to study to be very prompt in obedience. Even if they are not Religious, it will be a great thing to do as many do, and to have someone to direct them, so that they will not be doing their own will in anything, for this is what usually does us most harm. They should not choose someone of their own way of thinking, as we say, who is over-prudent in everything, but a director who is really detached from worldly things, for it is a great assistance to us to treat with such an one, so that we may come to know ourselves.

There are some things that seem to us to be quite impossible to bear, but seeing that others put up with them, and the sweetness with which they do so, we are greatly inspirited, and their flight emboldens us to fly. Thus it is with the children of the birds, who when they are taught to fly, though they cannot make a long flight at first, little by little, they imitate their parents. This is immensely helpful, as I know well.

However determined they are not to offend the Lord, such persons should carefully avoid occasions of sin, because they are still close to the first mansions, and they could easily return to them, for their strength is not yet firmly grounded, as it is in those who have been exercised in suffering, who know how little there is to fear from the tempests of the world, or cause to desire its pleasures. But beginners might return to them under strong persecution, for the devil knows well how to manipulate them to do us harm, and while zealously trying to help others to overcome sin, these immature souls might themselves be unable to resist the onslaught made upon them.

Let us take note of our own faults, and leave others alone. We frequently find that persons who are very strict are shocked at everything, and perchance, those who shock them, could teach them some essentials of conduct, even if they have the advantage over them in exterior behaviour and conversation. These are not the most important things, good though they be, nor are they a reason for seeking to impose our way upon everyone else, nor to set ourselves to teach spiritual things to someone who perhaps does not understand what we are driving at. Indeed, daughters, the very desire that God gives us to help souls may lead us into grave errors, so it is better to confine ourselves to what our Rule requires of us; always to live in silence and in hope,\* for the Lord will take care of the souls who are his. Let us not neglect, ourselves, to beg him to do so, and thus by his grace, we may render them a great service. May he be for ever blessed!

\* *Isaiah XXX, 15. Rule. On Silence.*

## FOURTH MANSIONS

## Chapter I

*The Saint treats of the difference between satisfactions or tenderness in prayer, and delights, and speaks of the relief she felt on hearing that the imagination and the understanding are not the same thing; it is helpful for those who suffer from distractions in prayer.*

Before beginning to speak of the fourth mansions, I felt the need of commending myself to the Holy Spirit, as I have done, begging him henceforth to speak for me, concerning the remaining mansions, and in such wise that you may understand.

For now, supernatural things begin to take place, and it will be most difficult to make them clear, if his Majesty does not do so, as he did fourteen years ago,\* more or less, when I wrote about this state so far as I then understood it. Though it seems to me that I have a little more light now on the favours which the Lord accords to certain souls, there is a great difference between understanding them and writing about them.

May his Majesty aid me, if some benefit will accrue from it, otherwise I do not ask it.

As these mansions are closer to the King's palace, they are of great beauty, and the things seen and heard in them are so subtle, that the understanding is incapable of giving any account of them, which does not leave much that is obscure to those who have no experience, but those who have, especially when it is considerable, will comprehend without difficulty.

In order to reach these mansions, it is apparently necessary to have lived in the others for some time, but though, ordinarily, souls must have passed through the state just described, there is no fixed rule, as you have often heard, for the Lord gives when he wills, as he wills, and to whom he wills ; his benefits are his own, and he wrongs no one.†

Venomous creatures seldom enter these mansions, and if they enter they do no harm ; on the contrary, they leave good behind them. I even hold that it is better that they should enter, and give battle in this state of prayer, for in the midst of the joys that God imparts, the devil might deceive us, if we had no temptations. He may do us much more harm if we are without them, and we do not gain so much merit, since occasions for acquiring it are removed, and the soul is left in a continual absorption in God. Now, when this happens, I doubt its genuineness, for it does not seem to me possible in this exile, that the Holy Spirit can remain united with us so intimately for long.

Now, speaking of what I promised to say here concerning the difference between satisfactions and delights, it seems to me that we may call those satisfactions that we obtain ourselves from meditations and petitions to our Lord, which proceed from our nature, though in fact God helps us,

\* *The Saint refers to her Autobiography.*

† *S. Matth. XX. 15.*



and you must always understand, whatever I may say, that we can do nothing without him. These satisfactions arise from virtuous action itself, we seem to owe them to our own efforts, and we are pleased, and rightly so, to be employed in such a manner.

But if we consider the matter, we shall find that many things that happen in the world give us the same kind of satisfaction. For instance, when someone suddenly comes into a large fortune, or we unexpectedly see a person whom we dearly love ; or we are successful in some important business or great affair, and everyone congratulates us ; or again, a woman is told that her husband, brother, or son is dead, and she finds that he is alive. I have seen tears of joy shed in great happiness, and it happened to myself on one occasion. It seems to me that these natural satisfactions are of the same kind as those caused us by the things of God, but these latter are more noble, though the former are not in the least wrong ; in fact, they commence in our nature and end in God. Delights, however, begin with God and nature shares them, and rejoices in them, as in those I have described and even more so.

O Jesus! how much I wish I had the knowledge to explain this! for to my mind a very decided difference exists between satisfactions and delights, but I do not succeed in making my meaning clear. May the Lord do so! I recollect at this moment, a phrase which occurs at the end of the last Psalm of Prime: "*Cum dilatasti cor meum.*"\* For those who have had much experience, these words suffice to define the difference between the two, but otherwise, further definition is necessary.

The satisfactions that have been described, do not dilate the heart ; on the contrary, they appear somewhat to restrict it, though it rejoices at seeing all that is done for God. Nevertheless, at times, tears of distress are shed that seem in some sort to be caused by passion. I know little about the passions of the soul, and what proceeds from the sensitive part, and what from nature, or perhaps I could better make myself understood. I am very ignorant, and so, although I have experience of these things, I cannot explain them as I should be able to do, if I knew more. Knowledge and learning are a great help in everything.

My experience of this state, speaking of the joy and satisfaction to be found in meditation, is that when I began to weep over the Passion, I could not stop until I had given myself a bad headache ; if over my sins, the same thing ; and this was a great grace from our Lord. Now, I do not wish to examine which of the two are better, satisfactions or delights, but I do wish clearly to depict the difference between them. Concerning such things, sometimes tears and desires are aided by nature, and our disposition at the time, yet in spite of this, they do, in fact, end in God, as I have said. They are to be prized, if there be humility, and a realisation that we are not better because of them, since we cannot be sure that they are the effects of divine love, and if they are, it is the gift of God.

For the most part, souls in the preceding Mansions experience these effects of devotion, because they are almost always at work with the understanding, employing the intellect in discourse and in meditation,

\* Ps. CXVIII, 32.

and they do well, because more has not been given to them. They should, however, make a point of spending some moments in eliciting acts, and in praising God, rejoicing in his goodness, and that he is what he is, and in desires for his honour and glory ; this, as they are able, because it stimulates the will, and they should be very careful, when the Lord gives them such sentiments, not to reject them in order to finish their customary meditation. Since I have spoken elsewhere about this,\* and at some length, I will not say more here ; only I wish to warn you, that to make good progress along this road, and to ascend to the mansions of our desire, the important thing is not to think much, but to love much, and therefore, whatever best disposes you to love, this you should do.

Perhaps we do not know what it is to love, and this would not greatly surprise me, for love does not consist in a great sense of devotion, but in a great determination to strive to please God in everything, to endeavour so far as we can not to offend him, and to pray that his Son may be ever more honoured and glorified, as also for the increase of the Catholic Church. These are the signs of love, but do not imagine it is required of us to think of nothing else, and that when your thoughts wander, all is lost. I have sometimes been greatly distressed by this mental turmoil, and it is scarcely more than four years ago, that I came to understand by experience, that the mind, or the imagination, to be more correct, is not the same thing as the understanding. I questioned a theologian about it, and he told me that this is so, which was not a little relief to me. As the understanding is one of the powers of the soul, to find it so distracted at times had been very hard to bear, but the imagination flies off at a tangent, and God alone can control it. When he chooses to do so, it almost seems as if in some sort, we are detached from our bodies. The powers of my soul seemed to me to be occupied with God, and recollected in him, while on the other hand, my mind was in a tumult ; I had been quite puzzled by it. O Lord ! take account of what we suffer in this way from want of knowledge. The evil is, that believing that we need nothing but to think of thee, we do not even see the necessity of questioning those who are more learned, since we do not realise what we ought to enquire about, and we suffer terrible trials because we do not understand ourselves. Sometimes we imagine that we are gravely at fault in what is not only not evil, but good. Hence arise the many afflictions which some people suffer in prayer. They complain of interior trials, and this is especially frequent among uneducated people ; they become melancholy and lose their health, and even give up prayer altogether, because they do not consider that there is a world within themselves.

Just as we cannot arrest the course of the stars, which move with immense rapidity, neither can we control our imagination ; we allow all the powers of the soul to be influenced by it, and then we think we are lost, and we waste the time we are spending in God's presence. For the soul, it may be, is closely united with him in the mansions very near to his palace, while the mind is in the precincts of the castle, suffering from the presence of a thousand savage and venomous creatures, and however,

\* In her "*Life*," chap. XII.

gaining merit thereby.

Therefore, we must not be disturbed, nor abandon our prayer, which is what the devil wishes, because for the most part, all the disquiet and suffering proceed from this: that we do not understand ourselves. While writing this, I am wondering what is the cause of the loud noise in my head, of which I spoke at the beginning, and which makes it almost impossible to fulfil the command given me to write. It seems to me as if there were within it nothing less than many rivers in flood, and that their waters, moreover, form cascades; many little birds seem to be whistling, and not in my ears, but in the upper part of my head, where it is said that the superior part of the soul resides. I too have held this opinion for a long time, for it seems that when the spirit is greatly moved, it rushes rapidly upwards.

Please God, that I may remember to speak of the cause of this when we arrive at the following mansions, as this is not the proper place. I should not be surprised if the Lord wished to give me this bad head, so that I may understand the matter better, for all this turmoil in it does not interfere with my prayer, and with what I am saying; besides, my soul is in perfect tranquillity, undisturbed in its love, desires, and clear knowledge. Then, if it be true that it is in the upper part of the head that the superior part of the soul resides, why is it not disturbed? This I do not know, but I do know that what I say is true.

If prayer be without ecstasy, I suffer, but so long as ecstasy lasts, I am not conscious of any harm. It would, however, do me immense harm were I to abandon my prayer because of the state of my head. Consequently, it is not well to be disturbed about wandering thoughts, nor to let them worry us, for if the devil suggests them, they will cease if we disregard them, and if they arise, as they do, from the misery bequeathed to us by Adam's sin, with much besides, let us have patience, and bear them for the love of God.

We are also subject to the necessity of eating and sleeping, without being able to dispense ourselves, much to our disgust; we realise our misery and long to go where none shall despise us.\* I sometimes recall these words of the Bride in the Canticle, and truly, I have never in my life found anything that can be said with more reason. For all the contempt and trials we may meet with in the world do not seem to equal these interior struggles. However great the anxiety and strife, everything is bearable when we find peace within ourselves, as I have said before; but while we wish to find rest from the thousand troubles of this life, and while the Lord wishes to prepare this rest for us, the obstacle lies in ourselves, and this cannot fail to be extremely painful and almost intolerable. Take us then, Lord, where these miseries will no longer flout us, for sometimes, they seem to make a plaything of the soul.

Even in this life, the Lord always sets us free from this when the last mansion is reached, as I shall explain, if he grant me the grace to do so. These miseries do not cause everyone so much trouble, nor do they attack them as, for many years, they have attacked me, for my wickedness,

\* *Canticle of Solomon, VIII, 1.*



and it seems as if I wished to be avenged upon myself. As this interior strife has been so troublesome to me, I think perhaps it may be so to you, and so I shall continue to speak of it, in one way or another, in the hope that I may succeed one day in making you understand that it is unavoidable.

Do not permit it to make you anxious and unhappy, but leave the clacking of the mill to continue, while we grind our corn, not ceasing to work with the will and understanding. Distractions are more or less disturbing according to health and circumstances. The poor soul suffers, though it is not to blame for them, and since we fail in other ways, it is only right that we should have patience.

Since our reading, and the advice we receive not to pay any heed to these wandering thoughts, do not suffice to re-assure those who are little instructed, it seems to me that I am not wasting time in explaining the matter more fully, and in consoling you about it, but until the Lord chooses to enlighten us, little is gained. Yet it is necessary and our Lord wishes us to take ordinary measures to understand ourselves, and not to blame the soul for what is the fault of our weak imagination, our nature, and the devil.

## Chapter II

*The Saint continues the same subject, and explains by a comparison what are delights in prayer, and what must be done to deserve them.*

God bless me, how I have been wandering! I had already forgotten what I was discussing, for business and health compelled me to leave it until a better time, and now, as I have a bad memory, everything will be in disorder, because I cannot read over what I have written. And indeed, all that I say may perhaps be confused; at least, this is what I fear.

I think I spoke of spiritual consolations, and how sometimes they are linked with our passions. They may bring on fits of sobbing, and I have even heard that in some people, they cause a contraction of the chest, even exterior movements, which they cannot control, and of so violent a kind as to produce bleeding of the nose, and similar distressing symptoms.

About this I can say nothing, not having had experience of such things, but some comfort must remain, since, as I said, everything ends in a desire to please God, and to rejoice in his Majesty.

But those consolations that I call a taste of God, which elsewhere I have called the prayer of quiet, are altogether different, as those of you understand, who by His mercy, have experienced them.

To comprehend the matter better, let us imagine two fountains, with two basins which fill with water, for I cannot find anything more appropriate than water to explain spiritual things. Since I know little, and my imagination does not help me, and I am very fond of this element, I have considered it more attentively than other things. Everything that a God so great and so wise has created must have very many secrets from which

we may learn, and those who know some of them, do so. Still, I believe that there are more than anyone can understand in every little thing that God has made, even though it be but an ant.

Now these two fountains are supplied with water by different means. One obtains it from far away, by a number of aqueducts and much machinery ; the other receives it direct from the spring, and the basin fills without the least sound. When the spring is plentiful, as this of which we are speaking, from the full basin there flows a great stream ; no machinery is necessary, nor have we to fear a breach in the aqueducts, for the waters of the spring do not cease to flow. Very different from this is the water that comes by aqueducts. This water signifies the satisfactions derived from meditation. We obtain them by reflections, by the consideration of created things, and by teasing our minds. When, at last, the profit resulting from our diligence begins to fill the soul, it creates a certain amount of noise, as has been said.

To the other fountain, the water comes from the Spring itself, which is God, and when his Majesty wishes and is pleased to grant some supernatural favour, it produces, in the most intimate depths of our being, the greatest peace, tranquillity and sweetness, and I know not whence nor how. This joy and delight, unlike anything of earth, are not felt in the heart, I mean at the beginning, but later they fill the whole being. This water spreads through all the Mansions and powers until it reaches the body, and this is why I say that it begins in God and ends in ourselves, and certainly, as anyone will find who may experience it, the whole outer man rejoices in this gust and sweetness.

I was considering today, when writing this, that in the verse which says: "*Dilatasti cor meum*," the Psalmist declares that his heart is dilated, and it does not seem to me that he is speaking of a joy that has originated in his heart, but it comes from some even more interior region, as from a depth, and I think that it must be from the centre of the soul, as I have been told since, and shall explain later. Yes, truly, I see secrets in ourselves that often cause me to marvel, and how many more there must be!

O my Lord, and my God, how stupendous is thy greatness! But we live here below like silly little shepherds, and we think that we grasp something of thee ! Yet it must be next to nothing, since within ourselves are deep secrets that we do not understand. I say "next to nothing," but I mean in comparison with what there is in thee, and not because the marvels that we see are not very great, even in those works of thine that we are able to comprehend.

Returning to the verse, it seems to me that I can make use of it here to explain the expansion which the celestial water from the Source, begins to produce. Welling up within us, it dilates and enlarges the whole interior, and confers such benefits as cannot be described, nor can the soul even begin to understand what it is that is given to it then. It is conscious of a fragrance, as if, let us say, in that intimate depth there were a brazier into which had been cast sweet-smelling perfumes ; the fire cannot be seen, nor the place where it is, but the heat and fragrant smoke penetrate the whole soul, and, as I have said, are even very frequently perceived by the body. Mark well, and understand me, that



neither is the heat actually felt, nor the perfume sensibly perceived ; I make use of these figures to help you to understand something far more delicate.

Persons who have not had such an experience, should feel assured that it is true, and does actually take place ; one is conscious of it, and the soul understands it more clearly than I am now describing it. It is not something that can be imagined, for no diligence on our part can obtain it, and in itself it is seen to be not of our metal, but it is of that purest gold of the divine Wisdom. Here, it seems to me, the powers are not united with God. They are inebriated and, astonished, are considering what has taken place.

It is possible, that in speaking of these interior matters, I may contradict something that I have said elsewhere ; this is not to be wondered at, because in the fifteen years or so that have elapsed since I wrote about them,\* the Lord may perhaps have given me a clearer light upon these subjects than I had then, and both now and then, I may be entirely in error, though not in untruth, for by the grace of God, I would rather suffer a thousand deaths: I speak as I understand.

It seems to me that the will ought truly to be united in some way with the will of God ; however, it is in the effects and conduct which follow prayer, that the truth of what has been experienced is made known, and there is no better crucible in which to test it. It is a great grace from the Lord if the person recognise that she has actually received these favours, and a very great grace if she do not turn back.

You would like, my daughters, to reach this state of prayer immediately, and you are right, for the soul cannot over-estimate the favours that the Lord shows her then, nor the love with which he draws her ever nearer to himself, and indeed, we may well desire to know how to obtain such graces.

I will tell you what I have learned concerning this matter. Let us leave aside those occasions, when the Lord is pleased to grant this grace just because he wishes to do so ; he knows why ; and we must not discuss his reasons. Then we shall be practising what I advised in the preceding Mansions,—humility, humility,—the Lord allows himself to be vanquished by this virtue, so that he will do whatever we wish.† Now the first sign that you possess it, is that you do not think that you deserve these graces and gusts from the Lord, nor count upon ever having them in your life. You will perhaps ask me, how you can hope to obtain them, if you do not endeavour to do so? To this I reply, that there is no better way than that of which I have spoken, and you should not seek them, for the following reasons:

The first is, that our primary need to this end is to love God without self-interest ; the second is, that humility is somewhat lacking, if we imagine that our miserable services give us any right to expect such favours ; the third is, that the true preparation for them is the desire of suffering, and of imitating the Lord, and not to look for delights, seeing, that after all, we have offended Him ; the fourth is, that his Majesty is

\*In 1562, in her *Life*. †*Way of Perfection*, ch. XVII, On the game of chess.

not obliged to give them to us, as he is to give us heaven, if we keep his commandments, for without this we could not be saved. He knows better than we do what is good for us, and who truly loves him, and this is a fact ; I know it, and I know persons who follow the way of love as it should be followed, for the sole service of their crucified Christ. Not only do they not ask for delights, but they beg that they may not be given to them in this life ; this is true. The fifth reason is, that our labour will be in vain, for since this water is not brought by aqueducts, as that is of which we first spoke, if the Spring do not wish to produce it, it is of little use to weary ourselves. What I want to say is, that though we increase our meditations, though we chastise ourselves and shed tears, not by these means will the water be induced to flow. It is given solely to whom God wills, and very often when the soul is least expecting it. We are his, Sisters, let him do what he wills with us, and lead us where he pleases ; I fully believe that if we are truly humble and detached (I say "truly," because to be so in our thoughts is not enough, for we may deceive ourselves, but we must be really detached from everything), the Lord will not delay to grant this grace, and many others, beyond our wit to desire. May he be ever praised and blessed. Amen.

### Chapter III

*This chapter treats of the prayer of recollection, which the Lord usually grants before that which has already been discussed.*

*The Saint speaks of its effects, and concludes her exposition of those mentioned in the last chapter, which dealt with the delights that the Lord gives.*

The effects of this prayer are many ; I will speak of some of them. But first, I will mention another kind of prayer, which almost always precedes this ; as I have spoken about it elsewhere,\* I will say little here.

The recollection with which it begins also seems to me to be supernatural, and darkness is not necessary for it, nor to close the eyes, nor does it depend upon anything exterior. The eyes may, however, close involuntarily, and one may experience a desire for solitude. Though there is no conscious effort on our part, the soul seems to be busy constructing the edifice for the prayer of which I have spoken, and the senses and exterior things seem to be losing their hold, because the soul is beginning to recover the empire she had lost.

Some say that the soul enters into herself, others, that she rises above herself. I do not know how to express myself at all in these terms, and I am wrong in this: that I think you will understand what I *am* able to say; but perhaps, after all, no one will understand it except myself.

Let us suppose that the senses and powers, which, as I have said,

\* *Life, ch. XIV.*

people this Castle,—and I have chosen this figure to make my meaning clear,—have left it, and during many days, and even years, have mingled with the strangers outside, who are inimical to the welfare of the Castle. But realising their loss, they are now drawing near to it again, and though they do not succeed in entering it once more, since the habit of remaining outside is hard to break, yet they are no longer traitors, and they walk about just outside the Castle.

Seeing their goodwill, the King who dwells within it, in his great mercy, wishes them to return to him, and like a kind Shepherd, with a gentle pipe that they themselves scarcely hear, he yet makes his voice known, so that they may no longer be so lost, but may return to his dwelling. The Shepherd's pipe has so much power, that they shake themselves free from the exterior things that had long captivated them, and they slip into the Castle. It seems to me that I have never before described this favour as now. It is a great help when God grants it, because to seek him interiorly is to find him more readily, than in creatures and with more profit to our souls (as Saint Augustine says that he found him, after he had sought him in many places).\*

But do not think that this grace is acquired by the understanding, and by trying to think of God within yourselves, or by the imagination, depicting him within you ; these are good, and an excellent kind of meditation, because based on the truth, that God is really within us ; but it is not this, which each of us can do for herself, with the help of the Lord, as is always understood. What I am speaking of is something different. Sometimes, before we even begin to think of God, the senses and powers are already within the Castle, and I do not know where, nor how they have heard the Shepherd's pipe ; it was not by the ears, for they have heard nothing, yet a sweet recollection is plainly distinguished in the interior, which those who experience it will recognise, but which I do not know how better to describe.

I think I have read, that this introversion resembles the manner in which a hedgehog or a tortoise withdraws into itself, and he who wrote this must have understood the matter very well. But these creatures enter into themselves at will ; while it is not within our power, except when God wills to grant us this favour. For my own part, I believe that his Majesty grants it to persons who have already renounced the world, I do not mean in actual fact, because their state in life may prevent this, and they can do so only in desire, but he calls them in a very special way to the interior life, and I feel sure, that if they choose to give free room to his Majesty, he will not grant this favour only, to those whom he begins to call to higher things.

Those who recognise this grace within themselves should praise him greatly, for it is only right to do so, and gratitude for it will prepare us to receive other and more exalted favours. Also it is a disposition which induces us to listen, and some books advise us not to try to meditate, but to be attentive to see what the Lord is working in our souls. But if his Majesty has not begun to inebriate us, I do not see how the mind can be

\* *In his Confessions. Book X, ch. 27.*



prevented from discoursing, without doing more harm than good. This point has been disputed at length among certain spiritual authorities. I must confess my want of humility, for they have never persuaded me to yield to them on this point.

One of them presented me with a certain book by the holy Fray Pedro de Alcantara, and holy I believe he is, and I would submit myself to him, because I know that he is instructed in this matter. But when we read the book, we found that he said the same as myself, though not in the same words. It is to be understood by what he says, that meditation must cease only when love is awakened in the soul. It may be that I am mistaken, but these are my reasons:

First, in this spiritual work, he does most who thinks little, and is not inclined to much thought. What we have to do, is to beg, like poor necessitous people, before a great and rich emperor, and then to lower our eyes, and humbly hope. When God seems to be secretly making known to us that he hears us, it is well to be silent, since he has allowed us to approach him, and it will do us no harm then to give up working with the understanding ; I mean, if we can. But if we do not see that the King has heard or noticed us, it is not for us to be stupid, as we should be if we continued to do nothing. Dryness would increase, and probably the imagination would be made more restless by the effort made to think of nothing.

But what the Lord wishes is, that we make our petitions to him, and realise that we are in his presence: he knows how to satisfy us. I cannot persuade myself to human industry in matters where his Majesty has set limits, reserving to himself the right to pass them. He has left to us many other things that we can do, with his help, such as penances, good works, and prayer, so far as our misery will allow.

The second reason is, that these interior workings are all sweet and peaceful, and to do a painful thing would be more injurious than helpful. I call painful whatever costs us effort, such as holding the breath. The soul should leave itself in the hands of God, to do what he likes with it, with as much disregard as possible of self-interest, and a great resignation to his will.

The third reason is, that the very effort made not to think of anything would perhaps excite the mind to think the more.

The fourth reason is, that the most substantial and agreeable service that we can render to God is to care for all that concerns his honour and glory, forgetting ourselves and our interests, our comfort and our tastes.

Now in what way have we forgotten ourselves, when we are so careful of our recollection, that we do not dare to stir, nor even to allow the understanding and desires to stir, to seek the greater glory of God? or to rejoice in the glory that he has? When his Majesty wishes the understanding to cease working, he occupies it in another way, and he illumines the mind to a degree so far above what we can attain to, that it remains in absorption, and then, without knowing how, we find ourselves in possession of a knowledge, that with all our diligence to suspend our thought, we do not obtain. Since God gave us our powers to work with, and he rewards them all, it is not for us to place them under a spell, but we should

allow them to fulfil their office, until God employs them in another and a higher one.

What I believe is most meet for the soul, that God is pleased to introduce into this Mansion, is what I have said, and that is, that without the least force or noise, it should endeavour to cease to discourse with the understanding, but not to suspend its activity entirely, nor that of the imagination, for it is well to recollect that we are in the presence of God, and who this God is. If we find ourselves inebriated in Him, well and good, but we should not try to understand what this is, because it is an inebriation of the will. Leave the will, then, to enjoy, without doing anything, beyond uttering a few loving words, for though we should not try to be without any thought whatever, we shall often be so, though only for a very short time.

I have spoken elsewhere\* of the reason why the understanding is troubled in this kind of prayer, of which I commenced to speak at the entrance to this Mansion. I spoke of it at the same time as I mentioned the prayer of recollection, but I ought to have explained this latter prayer first, as it is very inferior to that in which God grants a taste of himself, though it is a preparation for that prayer.

In the prayer of recollection, neither meditation nor the work of the intellect must be abandoned. In the prayer of divine delights, which is to be compared to the fountain fed from the Spring, and not by means of aqueducts, the understanding is troubled, and made uneasy, at seeing that it does not comprehend what it wishes, and so it goes to and fro like an idiot, finding rest nowhere.

The will is in such deep repose in its God, that this motion greatly afflicts it. It is therefore necessary to ignore it, or it will make it lose much of what it is enjoying.† The will must let the understanding alone, and abandon itself into the arms of Love, and his Majesty will teach it what it must do in this state. Almost everything is to acknowledge oneself unworthy of so much good, and to be employed in thanksgiving.

In order to speak of the prayer of recollection, I left aside the effects and signs produced in souls to whom God, our Lord, gives the prayer of delights. The soul clearly perceives in herself a dilation and expansion. Let us suppose water flowing from a fountain into a basin that has no outlet; but the basin is constructed of such a material, that as more water flows into the basin, the larger it grows; thus it seems in this prayer.

Many other marvellous things God works in the soul, so as to enable and dispose it to contain all his gifts. This suavity and interior expansion have lasting effects. The soul is not now so meagre in its manner of serving God, but has become much more generous; also, it is not so much weighed down by the fear of hell, for though it is more than ever afraid of offending God, fear is no longer servile, and great confidence of enjoying him prevails. He who was wont to fear to lose his health by doing penance, now seems to think that everything can be done for God, and his desire to do it is much stronger than before. The fear of trials that

\* *Way of Perfection, ch. XXXI.*

† *Ibid. ch. XXXIII.*



he once experienced, is greatly moderated, because his faith is more lively, and he realises that if he suffers for God, his Majesty will give him the grace to suffer with patience, and sometimes he desires trials, because he now feels a great longing to do something for God. As the knowledge of his greatness increases, he sees more clearly than ever his own misery ; having already tasted the pleasures of God, he sees what rubbish are those of the world : little by little, he detaches himself from them, and grows in self-mastery by doing so.

In fact, he is strengthened in every virtue, and he will not cease to improve, if he do not turn back and offend God, for then all would be lost, however near the summit of perfection he might be. It must not be supposed, however, that all these effects are to be noted after God has granted this prayer but once or twice. Perseverance is needed to procure them, and on this perseverance our whole welfare depends.

I strongly advise one thing to whoever finds himself in this state: that he be very careful indeed to avoid occasions of offending God, for at this point he is not yet fully-grown ; he is like a child just beginning to suck. If he leave his mother's breast, what can be expected, but that he will die? I very much fear that if anyone to whom God has shown this favour should neglect prayer, it will be thus, except it be on some very exceptional occasion, and he returns to it quickly ; otherwise, he will go from bad to worse. I know that there is much to fear in this case, and I am acquainted with some persons who have caused me great grief, for I have seen what I speak of, that they have separated themselves from him, who, with so much love, wished to make himself their Friend, and to give practical expression to his love.

I earnestly warn those to whom God has shown such favours not to place themselves in occasions of sin, because the devil is much more concerned to gain one of these souls than many others not so highly favoured, for she can injure him greatly by influencing others, and doing great service, it may be, in the Church of God. And though there were no other reason than that he sees that His Majesty shows these souls a special love, this suffices to induce the demon to try every means to gain them ; and so they meet with great opposition, and if they fall, they fall lower than others.

You, Sisters, are free from these dangers, so far as we can see ; from pride and vain-glory may God deliver you! The demon will therefore seek to counterfeit these favours ; his shams however, will not have the same effects, but quite the reverse.

There is one danger I would warn you of, though I have mentioned it in another place,\* into which I have seen some prayerful persons fall, especially women ; as we are weaker, there is more reason to speak of it. It is that some, what with great penances, prayer and many vigils, and even without these, are so enfeebled, that when they have any spiritual joy, nature succumbs ; and when they feel an interior satisfaction, and an exterior languor and weakness, (such as that experienced in a slumber that is called spiritual, but which is of a higher nature than what I am now

\* *Book of Foundations, ch. VI.*

describing), it seems to them that one is the same as the other, and they allow themselves to become as if intoxicated. The more they let themselves go, the more intoxicated they become, because their natural weakness increases, and they imagine themselves to be in ecstasy. But I call it nonsense, for there is nothing in it but loss of time and wasting of the health. A woman was for eight hours in this state, and she neither lost consciousness, nor was she conscious of anything from God. By making her sleep and eat, and not allowing her to do so much penance, someone who understood her set this person free from the delusion by which her confessor and other people were deceived, as well as herself, for she had had no intention of deceiving. I truly believe that the devil was busy there for some evil purpose, for he had already begun to reap no small gain.

It must be understood that when an experience is really due to God's action, although there may be interior and exterior languor, there is none in the soul, but it has a great sense of joy at seeing itself so close to God ; neither does this state last long, but on the contrary, only a very short time. Though the inebriation may return, and the prayer may continue, if they are not due to the weakness that I have described, the body will not be overpowered, nor will there be any exterior suffering.

Therefore, if any of you experience any such ill effects, you should mention the matter to the Prioress, and divert yourself as much as you can. She will not allow you so much prayer-time, but rather very little, and will endeavour that you sleep and eat well, until she sees that you are returning to your usual health, if it has been lost in this way.

If a nun is of such a weak constitution, that this is not enough, believe me, God does not want her to follow any but the active life, and in all our monasteries some must do so. Employ her in the offices, and always see that she is not too much alone, or she may lose her health entirely. This will be a great mortification for her ; perhaps the Lord wishes to prove the love that she has for him by the way she takes his absence, and he may be pleased to give her a fresh access of strength after a time ; but if not, she will profit by vocal prayer and obedience, and she will merit as much by these as by the other, and perhaps more.

Also, there may be others of such a weak head and imagination, and I have known some, that it seems to them that they see everything they think about. This is extremely dangerous, but perhaps I shall speak of it farther on, so I will not say more now.

I have written at length about this Mansion, as I believe the greater number of souls enter it, and as the natural and supernatural are here intertwined, the devil can do much harm ; but in those Mansions I have yet to speak of, the Lord does not give him so much scope. May he be forever praised. Amen.

## FIFTH MANSIONS

*Chapter I*

*In this chapter the Saint begins to describe how the soul unites herself, with God in prayer ; she explains how she may know that she is not in delusion*

Oh, Sisters, how can I describe to you all the wealth, the treasures and joys to be found in the fifth Mansions? To my thinking, it would be better to say nothing about those that remain, since it is impossible to know what to say, and the understanding cannot grasp, nor can any metaphor serve to depict them, for the things of earth are too base for this purpose.

Send forth, my Lord, light from on high, so that I may be able to give a little light to these thy servants, some of whom thou art pleased frequently to admit to taste of thy joys, lest they be deceived by the demon who disguises himself as an angel of light, for all their desires are centred in the one desire of pleasing thee.

But though I said "some," very few enter within this Mansion which I am about to describe. They enter more or less, and for this reason, I say that the greater number enter. But some of the things which I have to speak of in this Mansion, are revealed to very few ; yet though we do but reach the door, even this is a singular grace from God, for though "many are called," yet "few are chosen."\*

Therefore I say now, that though all of us who wear this sacred Habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation, because in the beginning of the family of Mount Carmel, its first members sought this treasure, this precious pearl of which we are speaking, in deep solitude and utter contempt of the world, yet few of us so dispose ourselves that the Lord will communicate it to us. Though with regard to the exterior, we are in a fair way to acquire the necessary virtues, in order to obtain these graces, we have need of oh! so much, so much! and not to be neglectful of anything, little or much. For this reason, Sisters, earnestly beg our Lord, since we may in some measure enjoy heaven on earth, that he will grant us his grace, lest we lose it by our own fault; may he show us the way, and give us strength of soul to dig until we find this hidden treasure, for, in truth, it is within ourselves. This is what I wish to make clear to you, if the Lord be pleased to enlighten me.

I say "strength of soul," because you must understand that when God our Lord grants us this, strength of body will not be wanting. He does not make it impossible for anyone to purchase his good things; he is content if each one gives what he has. Blessed be so great a God! But mark well, daughters, that to obtain what is now in question, he wishes us to be possessed of nothing, little or much. He wants all for himself, and according to the measure of your conscious gift, there will be granted to

\* *S. Matth. XX. 16.*

you a greater or a lesser reward. There is no better test by which to discover whether our prayer is that of union or not.

Do not think that this is a matter of dozing, as in the last mansion; I say dozing, because the soul seemed to drowse, and was neither quite asleep, nor yet fully awake. Here it is really asleep, and fast asleep to the things of the world and self (for truth to tell, during the short time that union lasts, we are as if deprived of feeling, nor is there power to think, even if we would). In this state, there is no need to encourage love by an artificial suspension of thought; if there be suspension, the soul knows not how it is brought about, nor what it is she loves, nor what she wishes. She is, in fact, in every sense dead to the world, that she may live the more in God, and thus it is a delicious death; death, because it is the extinction in the soul of every form of activity possible to her while she is in the body; delicious, because though it seems to separate soul and body, it is but the better to enjoy God. I do not know whether the body retains life enough even to breathe. On thinking this over, it seems to me that it does not, or if it does, it is not conscious of breathing.

The intellect wishes to be occupied entirely in understanding something of what the soul is experiencing, but as its powers do not avail to this end, it remains in astonishment, in such wise, that if it be not entirely in suspension, it does not move foot nor hand, as we say of a person who is in so deep a swoon, that she appears to us to be dead.

Oh, secrets of God! I should never cease to strive to make you understand them, my daughters, if I thought that I should succeed in ever so slight a degree, and so I may say a thousand foolish things, if I can attain even once the end I have in view, that we shall greatly praise the Lord.

I said that it is not a matter of dozing, because in the Mansion of which I have spoken, until experience teaches, the soul remains in doubt as to what has taken place! whether it was fancy, or was she asleep; whether the experience was from God, or whether the devil had taken on the appearance of an angel of light. A thousand misgivings assail the soul, and it is well that it is so, because as I have said, we may sometimes be deceived by our own nature.

Though the venomous creatures cannot enter the fourth Mansion so freely, yet some little lizards, as they are so quick, may succeed in darting in, and though they do no harm, especially if we take no notice of them, (they are those trifling thoughts which I have described, and which proceed from the imagination), yet they often pester us. In this Mansion, agile as they are, they cannot enter, because neither the imagination, nor the memory, nor the understanding can impede this good. I dare to affirm that if it be truly union with God, the devil is powerless to enter, nor can he do us any harm, for His Majesty is so near, and united with the essence of the soul, that he does not dare to approach, nor should he even know of this hidden grace. And clearly he does not, for if, as it is said, he does not know our thoughts, how much less will he discover a thing so secret that God does not reveal it even to our understanding.

Oh, what happiness! a state wherein this accursed one can do us no harm! Thus the soul derives immense benefit from God's work within her, which is unimpeded by anyone, even ourselves. What will he not



give, who so delights in giving, and who is able to give all that he desires?

I seem to have left you in uncertainty, because I said: *if* it be union with God, as if there are other unions. And so there are, with vanities, when they are loved over-much; also the devil can transport us, but not in the same way that God does, nor are his transports accompanied by delight and satisfaction in the soul, and by peace and joy. This joy is above all earthly joys, above all satisfactions and pleasures, and what is more, we have only to see where these joys originate, and where those of earth, to realise how very different they are, as you who have experience can testify. It is as if the latter affect us only on the surface, while heavenly joys penetrate to the very marrow, as I have said elsewhere,\* and this was apt: indeed, I do not know how to express it better.

It seems to me that you are still dissatisfied, because you fear to be deceived, these interior impressions being hard to distinguish, and though I have said enough for those who have experience, because the differences are so marked, I wish to give you one positive sign, so that you could not be deceived nor doubt what comes from God; his Majesty has today brought it back to my memory, and in my opinion, it is certain.

When I am speaking of difficult matters, though it seems to me that I understand them, and I am speaking the truth, I use these words: "it seems to me." If I am deceived, I am very ready to believe what the theologians say, since, though they may not have experience of these things, they have I know not what of learning. As God has raised them up to enlighten his Church, when a thing is true, he inspires them to admit it, and if they are not indifferent, but truly servants of God, none of his wonders astonish them, for they understand perfectly that he can do this, and much more. And in fact, although some things are not yet elucidated, others may be found in writings, and these serve as tests. I have very great experience of this, and also of some scared mediocre scholars, who have cost me very dearly. Anyhow, it is my opinion that he who does not believe that God can impart even greater graces, that he has thought well to do so, and still wishes to communicate them to his creatures, has tightly shut the door of his soul against such graces. May this never happen to you, Sisters, but believe always more firmly in God's power, and do not consider whether those to whom he shows his favours are wicked or good, for his Majesty knows, as I have reminded you. It is not for us to meddle in this matter, but with simplicity of heart and in humility to serve him, and to praise him for his works and for his marvels.

Now returning to the sign which I know to be true, you see this soul, whom God has made a simpleton with regard to everything of earth, that he may the better imprint in her the divine wisdom, how she neither sees nor hears nor understands, during the time that she is in this state, which is of brief duration and seems to her even briefer than, in fact, it is. God establishes himself in the interior of this soul, in such a way, that when she returns to herself, she can have no manner of doubt that she has

\* *Way of Perfection, Chap. XXXIII.*

been in God and God in her, and this truth is so impressed within her, that though years may elapse before God grants her this grace again, it is neither forgotten, nor can she doubt that it was bestowed.

This is the important point, and we may even leave aside the effects of which she is conscious, and which I will describe later.

You may ask me how she can have seen or understood, if she could not see nor understand? I do not say that she saw at the time, but she sees clearly afterwards, and not by means of a vision, but a conviction remains in the soul, which God alone can implant.

I know of a person who had not arrived at the knowledge that God is in all things by his presence, power and essence, and after receiving from him a grace of this kind, she came to believe it so firmly that though a *demi-savant*, such as I have mentioned, whom she questioned as to how God is within us (he knew it as little as she until God gave him the knowledge of it), told her that he is within us only by grace, she had already grasped the truth so well, that she did not believe him, and she enquired of others, who confirmed her belief, whereat she was greatly consoled.\*

You must not be deceived into thinking that this conviction depends on a corporeal presence, as the body of our Lord Jesus Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament, although we do not see him, because here he is not present thus, but only in his Divinity. Then how, you may ask, can we have such a conviction, if we do not see him? This I do not know, it is his work, but I know that I am speaking truly, and I would say, that where there is not this certainty, there has not been complete union of the soul with God, but only a union with some one of the powers, or she has received one of the many other kinds of graces that God bestows on the soul.

We must give up seeking reasons for these things, and to see how they can happen, for our understanding cannot grasp them, then why should we consume ourselves in vain? Let it suffice us to see that he who acts thus is omnipotent, and since, with all our efforts, we can do nothing on our side to obtain this favour, and it depends on God alone, let us not wish to understand it.

With regard to these words: "we can do nothing on our side," I remember those which the Bride in the Canticle spoke: "the King brought me into the cellar of wine"† (or "placed me," I think she says), she does not say that she went in of herself. She also says that she went about seeking her Beloved in one place after another. I understand that this grace of union is the wine-cellar into which the Lord wishes to introduce us, just when he wills, and how he wills, but, strive as we may, we cannot enter of ourselves. His Majesty must introduce us, and bring us into the centre of our soul. That he may the better reveal his marvels to us, he does not wish that our will should henceforth play any part; everything must be surrendered to him, nor will he open the door of the powers and senses, which are all asleep, but "the doors being shut," he will enter the centre of the soul, as he went in to his disciples,‡ when He said to

\* *The Saint herself. See Life, chap. XVIII.*

† *Cant. I. 3.* ‡ *S. John. XX. 19.*

them: "Pax vobis," or when he came forth from the sepulchre without removing the stone.

You will see in the last mansion even better than here, how his Majesty wishes the soul to enjoy his presence in her own centre. Oh, daughters, how much more clearly we shall then see our baseness and misery, if we care to do so, and understand that we are not worthy to be the servants of so great a Lord, whose wonders surpass our comprehension.

May he be for ever praised! Amen.

## Chapter II

*Continues the same subject; the Saint explains the prayer of union by a delicate similitude; she speaks of its effects on the soul. The chapter is very noteworthy.*

It must seem to you that everything has been said regarding what there is to see in this Mansion, but there is much more, because, as I said, we enter more or less.

Concerning divine union, I think I have nothing to add, but when the soul to whom God grants such a grace is well-disposed, he will work many things in her, about which there is much to say. I will mention some, and their effects on the soul. To explain better, I should like to make use of a similitude which is very apt to this end, and also to show us how, although we can do nothing in this work of the Lord, to secure that he will grant us this favour, we can do much by way of disposing ourselves to receive it.

You must already have heard of the marvellous way in which silk is produced,—God alone could have invented such a thing,—and how seeds, resembling small grains of pepper, (as I have never seen them, but have only heard about them, if my facts are incorrect, the fault is not mine), in the warm weather, when the mulberry-trees begin to put forth leaf, come to life, which, until there is this food to sustain the silkworms, remain as if dead. The silkworms are fed on the leaves of the mulberry, and when they are full-grown, some twigs are placed for them, among which, with their little mouths, they spin the silk from within their own bodies, and make very compact cocoons, in which they enclose themselves.

And thus end these great, ugly worms, but from those same cocoons, issue very graceful, little white butterflies. Now, if this were not seen, but had only been related to us as a thing of the past, who would believe it? And how could we reasonably suppose, that a creature so wanting in intelligence as a worm, or as a bee, would be so diligent in working for our benefit, and with so much industry, that the poor little worm loses its life in the endeavour? Though I should say no more, Sisters, this would suffice for a short meditation, in which you might reflect on the marvels and the wisdom of our God. Then, what if we knew the properties of all things? It is of great profit to us to be employed in considering these great works, and to rejoice in being the spouses of a King so wise and powerful.

Let us return to what I was saying. This worm then, which is the soul, comes to life, when, by the influence of the warmth of the Holy Spirit, it begins to take advantage of the general helps given to us all by God, and of the remedies that he has left to us in his Church, such as frequent confession, spiritual reading, and hearing sermons, which are the remedies that a soul, dead by reason of neglect, sins, and being entangled in occasions of sin, can obtain. Then the soul commences to live, and it is sustained by these means, and by good meditations, until it is full-grown, and it is in this state that I will consider it, its previous condition being of little moment. As I have said above, this worm being grown, it begins to produce silk, and to build the house in which it is to die. I wish this house to be understood as Christ. I think I have read somewhere, or heard, that our life is hidden in Christ or in God, for they are One, or that our life is Christ.\* Whether I quote correctly or not, is of little importance for my purpose.

Now see here, daughters, what we can do with the help of God! and how in this prayer of union, with our co-operation, his Majesty himself may become our abode! I seem to wish to infer, that we can take away from or add something to God, since I say that he is the dwelling-place which we may make for ourselves, and into which we can introduce ourselves. And what if we can? not by taking away from or adding anything to God, but by quitting ourselves, and giving ourselves, as these little worms do, for we shall not have finished doing what we can, when God will take this little work, which is nothing at all, and will unite it with his great works, and give it so immense a value, that he, the Lord himself will become its reward. Thus, as it is he who has paid the greater part of the cost, so he wishes to unite our little labours with that great travail his Majesty undertook for our sakes, so that they may be but one thing with his work.

Then, onward, my daughters, make haste to accomplish this labour, and to weave this little cocoon, forsaking self-love and self-will, and the being attached to anything of earth; perform works of penance, prayer, mortification, obedience, and all the rest that you know of; and thus, we shall work as we know and are taught that we should do. Let it die, let it die, this (mystic) worm, as the silkworm dies, when it has finished doing that for which it was created, and you will see how we may see God, and find ourselves enveloped in his greatness, just as the little worm is in its cocoon.

Mark, that when I speak of seeing God, I mean in the way I defined when describing what is experienced in the prayer of union.

Now let us see what has become of this worm, for it is for this that I have said all the rest. When the soul is in this prayer, it is quite dead to the world, and it comes forth as a little white butterfly. Oh, power of God! in what a state does the soul emerge after being plunged but a short while in the greatness of God, and so closely united with him! Though I believe that this union never lasts for half an hour, I tell you of a truth, that the soul no longer recognises herself, for see what a difference there

\* *Col., chap. III, v. 3. Gal., chap. II, v. 20.*



is between an ugly worm and a white butterfly! It is the same with the soul.

Whence is it that she can merit so great a happiness? from whence has it come to her? I ask, for she knows well that she does not deserve it. She is filled with the desire of praising the Lord, of being consumed and dying for his sake a thousand deaths. Now she begins to long to suffer great trials, and she cannot do otherwise. She wishes to undertake the most severe penances, and to be in solitude; she desires that all should know God, and hence she feels great sorrow at seeing offences against him. In the next mansion these effects will be discussed more particularly, because what takes place there and in this one are almost exactly the same, but the strength of these effects is very different, for, as I have said, if after God has thus visited a soul, she makes efforts to advance, she will see great things.

Oh, see now the restlessness of this little butterfly! while never in its life has it been more quiet and peaceful! It is something for which to praise God, since the reason why it does not know where to settle, and to establish itself is, that having tasted such repose in God, everything it sees on earth displeases it. This is especially so, when it has tasted of this sacred wine many times, almost every time receiving fresh graces.

Now, it regards as naught all those works it performed as a worm, when, little by little, it was weaving its cocoon. Its wings have grown, how then can it be satisfied with crawling, step by step, now that it can fly? The desire of this soul is to do everything possible for God. She is not surprised at what the Saints have suffered, having already had experience of the way in which the Lord helps and transforms a soul, for she no longer seems to be herself, nor is her aspect the same. The weakness which formerly prevented her from doing penance, has given place to strength enabling her to undertake it. Her attachment to relatives, friends, and possessions, which no efforts nor resolutions sufficed to make her wish to overcome, but she found herself only more enchained, she now sees to be so much abated, that it irks her even to be obliged to do what is necessary not to offend God. Everything wearies her, because she has proved that creatures can afford her no true repose.

I seem to be lengthy, but I could say much more, and those to whom God has granted this favour, will find me brief. It is, you see, not to be wondered at that this little butterfly seeks anew a place to settle, since she finds herself new to earthly things. But where shall this poor little thing go? Return whence it came, it cannot, for as I have said, this is not in our power, whatever we may do, until God is pleased to favour us thus once more.

Oh, Lord, and how many fresh trials begin to assail this soul! Who would have thought it, after a favour so exalted? But after all, after all, we must have the Cross, in one way or another, as long as we live! If anyone says, that after having reached this stage, he is always in peace and joy, I should say, on the contrary, that he has never arrived, but if he has reached the preceding Mansion, he has experienced some gust, enhanced by natural weakness, or even by the devil, who gives him peace, in order, later, to wage a still more bitter war against him.

I do not mean to say that those who reach this Mansion are not in peace, for they do indeed possess it, and a very deep peace, for the trials themselves are so valuable, and they proceed from a source so excellent, that however keen they may be, peace and happiness arise out of them. From the very disgust which the things of earth cause them, is born so painful a desire to leave it, that if any alleviation be found, it is in the thought that God wills them to live in this exile. Yet even this does not suffice, for in spite of its good progress, the soul is not yet so docile to the will of God as she will be later. Though she seeks to conform herself, it is with great suffering and many tears, and she cannot do better, because she has not received grace for it, but each time she sets herself to pray, this pain returns.

Perhaps, in some measure, it proceeds from the very great sorrow she feels to see how deeply God is offended, how little he is esteemed in this world, and how many souls are going to perdition, both among heretics and among the Moors. The loss of Christians grieves her still more, for though she appreciates the greatness of God's mercy, they live so ill who might amend and save themselves, that she fears many must be damned.

Oh, greatness of God, how few years and even days, perhaps, have elapsed since this soul thought of no one but herself! Who has inspired her with such sorrowful anxieties? Even years of meditation could not produce in us such painful impressions as this soul now feels.

But, God bless me! some among us may say, if I spend many days and years in considering how great an evil it is that God should be offended, in thinking that the damned are his children and my brothers, on the dangers in which we live, and how good it will be for us to be out of this miserable life, will this not suffice to give me sentiments of true grief?

Why, no, daughters, the pain felt by a soul elevated to divine union is not the same as that felt by others; this we may well experience, by the grace of God, and by much thinking, but it does not penetrate to the inmost being, as does the sorrow which this soul feels, and which, though it is unsought and even involuntary, seems to crush and consume her.

What, then, is this suffering? and from whence does it proceed? I will tell you. Have you not heard what I have already said above, though not with regard to this aspect of the Bride, how God introduces her into his wine-cellar, and orders charity within her? This is the explanation of her sufferings, for this soul is so entirely surrendered into his hands, and her great love has so subdued her, that she neither knows nor cares for anything, but that God shall do with her what he wills. But I am of the opinion, that God will never grant this favour except to a soul whom he regards as wholly his; he wishes that without her knowing how, she shall emerge from the prayer of union sealed with his seal; for truly the soul in this state is like nothing so much as wax, upon which another sets the seal. Wax does not imprint the seal upon itself, it is simply docile to the impress, I mean soft, and yet even this state is not of its own making,—it does not soften itself. Oh, generosity of God, who will have everything to be at thy cost! Thou dost desire only our will, and that there be no resistance in the wax.

Now you see, Sisters, what God does that this soul may be recognised as his; he gives of what he has, and it is what he gave to his Son in this life; he cannot do us a greater favour. Now, who more than he must have wished to leave this life? Indeed, his Majesty spoke of it in the supper-room: "With desire," he said, "I have desired,"—but, Lord, hadst thou no dread of the painful death thou wast to die? a death so cruel and so terrifying. "No, for my great love for souls, and my desire that they should be saved, immeasurably outweighed those sufferings. The anguish which I have endured, and endure, ever since I came into the world, suffices to make those trials appear as nothing in comparison."

Thus, many times have I meditated on these things, and knowing the torment that a certain soul suffers, and has suffered, in seeing our Lord offended, a suffering so insupportable that death seems to her greatly preferable, and thinking that if a soul with a mere spark of charity,—to be accounted for nothing in comparison with the charity of Christ,—feels this torment to be intolerable, what must have been the feelings of Jesus Christ? what a life he must have endured, since everything was present to him, and he had always in full view the great offences committed against his Father!

Without any doubt, I believe that these sufferings were very much greater than those of his sacred Passion, for then he saw the end of these trials, and this, and the happiness of seeing for us a remedy in his death, and of demonstrating his love for his Father in suffering so much for him, moderated his torments, as is the case with those, who, here below, undertake great penances in the strength of their love. They scarcely feel them; on the contrary, they desire to do more and more, and all that they do seems little. Then what must it have been to his Majesty to have so great an opportunity of showing to his Father how completely he fulfilled his obedience to him, and the law of neighbourly love.

Oh, what happiness to suffer in doing the will of God! But to see constantly so many offences committed against his Majesty, and so many souls going to hell, I regard as a thing so cruel, that I believe if he had not been more than man, one day of that suffering would have sufficed to extinguish many lives, then how much more, one.

### Chapter III

*Continues the same subject; the Saint speaks of other degrees of union to which the soul may attain by the grace of God, and of how important to this end is the love of our neighbour; it is a very helpful chapter.*

Now let us return to our little butterfly, and we may see something of what God gives to the soul at this stage. It must always be understood that she must strive to advance in the service of our Lord, and in the knowledge of herself, for if she make no more of this grace than to imagine

\* *Cant. II, 4.*      † *St. Luke XXII, 15.*

that it is assured to her, and she lives a careless life, mistaking the way to heaven, which is to follow the commandments, that will happen to her that happens to the butterfly, when it comes forth from the chrysalis. After laying the eggs which are to produce a fresh progeny, the butterfly dies for ever.

I say that she lays her eggs, because it is my opinion that God does not wish so great a favour as that of divine union to be given in vain, and if the soul who receives it does not profit by it herself, it may yet be profitable to others. While she remains fervent, her good desires and the virtues I have mentioned, make her helpful to others, and she imparts to them her own fervour; even when she has lost it, she still likes to feel that she is doing something for others, and to speak of the favours God grants to those who love and serve him. I have known a person to whom this happened,\* who having sadly relapsed herself, rejoiced that others should receive profit and help from the favours that God had shown to her, and to explain the way of prayer to those who did not understand it. By this means, she did good and very great good, and later, the Lord gave her fresh light. To tell the truth, she had not before this enjoyed the effects of the prayer of union that I have described. But they must have had them whom the Lord called to the apostolate. Judas for instance, with whom he conversed, and Saul whom he called to be king, who afterwards were lost by their own fault.

We may infer from this, Sisters, that to go on meriting more and more, and not be lost, as they were. our safety lies in obedience, and in not turning back from the law of God; this I say, not only to those who have received great favours, but to all.

In spite of all that I have said, however, this Mansion still seems to be somewhat obscure. Since there is so much to be gained by entering it, it is well that those to whom the Lord does not grant the supernatural favours that have been described, should not lose hope, for true union may very well be reached, with our Lord's help, if we exert ourselves to obtain it, by having no will of our own, but cleaving to whatever may be the will of God. Oh, how many of us say, and imagine that we wish for nothing else, and we would die to prove it, as I have remarked before. Then I tell you, and I will often repeat it, that if you are truly in these dispositions, you have obtained this favour from the Lord. Do not crave for that sensible union of which I have spoken, for all that is most precious in it proceeds from that of which I am now speaking, and the other may not be had, except there be entire resignation of our will to the will of God.

And oh, what a desirable union this is! Happy indeed the soul who has attained to it, for both in this life and in the next, she will live in peace; unless she sees herself in some danger of losing God, or that he is offended, no earthly happenings can trouble her, neither sickness, nor poverty nor death, unless it were that of someone who is a loss to the Church of God. This soul sees very well that God knows better what he is doing, than she herself knows what she desires. You must observe that

*\* The Saint herself.*



there are griefs and griefs, for some griefs, and joys also, arise immediately from our nature, and even from a charitable compassion for our neighbours, such as our Lord had when he restored Lazarus to life,\* and these do not interrupt the union of our wills with the will of God, nor do they disturb the soul with unquiet and anxious passion of long duration. These griefs pass quickly, and as I said regarding satisfactions in prayer, they do not seem to penetrate to the depths of the soul, but only reach the senses and powers. They are experienced in all these mansions, but not in the last, which has still to be described. Then, is that suspension of the powers, of which I have spoken, necessary to obtain this union? No, for the Lord is powerful and he can enrich souls in many ways, and bring them into these mansions, without taking the short cut above-mentioned.

But mark well, daughters, that the worm must die, and what is more, at your cost; in the transforming union described above, the soul is greatly helped to die by seeing herself in a new life, while in the union now in question, while living our normal life, we must do it to death ourselves. I confess that the work will be much more difficult, but it will have its reward, and the guerdon will be all the greater, if the victory be won: of its possibility there can be no doubt, if our will be truly united with the will of God.

All my life I have desired this union, and I have always besought our Lord to grant it to me, as being the most certain and secure way. But alas! how few among us attain to it! though it may seem that all is done when we are careful not to offend God, and we enter religion. Oh, but some worms remain that are not noticed, until, like the one that gnawed Jonas's ivy,† they have gnawed away our virtues. They are self-love, self-esteem, judging our neighbours (if only in little matters), a want of charity towards them, not loving them as ourselves; and though we force ourselves to fulfil the obligation of avoiding sin, our wills are still far from being entirely united with the will of God.

What do you think, daughters, is his will? That we should be absolutely perfect, so as to be, as his Majesty prayed, one with him and with his Father.‡ See how much is wanting to us to arrive at this! I assure you that I am writing this with keen sorrow, at seeing myself so far behind, and solely by my own fault; for the Lord does not need to give us great gifts for this; he has done enough in giving us his Son to teach us the way.

Do not think, that if my father or brother die, to conform myself with the will of God I must not grieve for them, and if I have troubles and sickness, that I must suffer them with joy. This is good, but sometimes it is mere prudence, because we cannot do otherwise, and we make a virtue of necessity. Now, many things of this kind the philosophers practised, or if not these, others, because they had knowledge. Here below, there are two things only that the Lord asks of us: love of his Majesty, and of our neighbour, and these are what we have to labour to acquire.

Keeping these two commandments perfectly, we shall do his will, and thus we shall be united with him. But how far we are, as I have said, from fulfilling as we ought these two duties towards God, who is so great!

\* *St. John XI, 35, 36.*

† *Jonas IV, 6, 7.*

‡ *St. John XVII, 22, 23.*

May his Majesty be pleased to give us his grace that we may deserve to reach this perfection, for it is in our own power, if we wish for it.

In my opinion, the most certain sign that we are keeping these two precepts, is our love for our neighbour, for whether or not we love God cannot be known,\* though there may be many indications of it, but neighbourly love is unmistakable. And be sure, that if you see that you are advancing in this, the more progress you are also making in the love of God, for his Majesty's love of us is so great, that to reward us for the love we show towards our neighbour, he will increase in us, in a thousand ways, our love for him; of this I can have no doubt. It is then of the utmost importance to pay great attention to this duty, for if we fulfil it very perfectly, we have done everything. I believe, myself, that since our nature is so evil, our love of our neighbour cannot attain perfection, except it have its birth in the love of God. As this, Sisters, is of such grave import, let us try to keep watch over ourselves even in little things, and not attach much importance to the fine plans that fill our minds when we are praying, concerning what we believe we would do and suffer for our fellows, and even to save a single soul; for if, afterwards, our works are not in line with these resolutions, there is no reason to think that we shall carry them out.

I say the same of humility and of every virtue: the wiles of the devil are many, and to make us believe that we have a virtue that we do not possess, he will turn hell upside down. And he is right, for he can thus injure us greatly. Fictitious virtues are never without vain-glory, as becomes their origin, while those bestowed by God are free from vanity and pride. I smile sometimes, to see certain souls, who, when they are at prayer, imagine that they are willing to be humiliated and publicly insulted for the love of God, and, later, they are seen trying, if possible, to hide some slight fault, or if they are not guilty, and are charged with it, God help us! Anyone in such a case must be very watchful, and not think much of any resolve that she had made in private, for in very truth it did not proceed from a firm will, but from the imagination, or her subsequent conduct would have been very different.

It is in the imagination that the devil works his shifts and deceptions, and in women, or uneducated people, he may be able to accomplish much, because they do not understand the difference between the powers and the imagination, and a thousand other interior matters.

Oh, Sisters, how plainly true neighbourly love is to be seen in some of you, and in others, not in the same perfection! If you understood how necessary to us this virtue is, you would make it your sole study. When I see souls very anxious about the kind of prayer they have arrived at, and so engrossed when they are in it, that they seem not to dare to move nor to interrupt their thoughts, lest they should lose some tittle of the sweetness of their devotion, it makes me realise how little they understand about the road that leads to union. Do they really think that the whole affair depends on such things? Why, no! my Sisters, no! the Lord looks for deeds.

\* *I. St. John IV, 20.*

If you see a sick Sister to whom you can give some relief, think nothing of leaving your prayers, and show compassion towards her, and if she have some sorrow, share it, and if it be necessary, fast that she may eat, not so much for love of her, as because you know that your Lord asks this of you. This is true union with his will. If you see a person greatly praised, be much more pleased than if you were praised yourself; this is quite easy, where there is humility, for then it will be painful to receive praise. It is also a great thing to rejoice in the virtues that you see in the Sisters, and when there is some fault, to feel it as if it were your own, and to conceal it.

I have said a great deal about this elsewhere, because I see, daughters, that if there be any lack of mutual charity, we are lost.\* May it please the Lord that this will never be, for with this charity, I assure you that you will not fail to obtain from his Majesty the grace of union such as I have described. When you see that you are wanting in this, though you may have devotion and consolations, and it seems to you that you have reached divine union, since you experience some slight suspension of the powers in the prayer of quiet,—and this makes some people think that everything is done,—believe me, that you will not have arrived at union.

Then beg our Lord to give you a perfect love towards your neighbour, and leave his Majesty to act. He will give you more than you know how to desire, if you will make efforts, and strive with all your might to acquire this charity; conquer your self-will by doing all that the Sisters wish, even at the loss of your own rights, forgetting your own interests in theirs, though nature may rebel; and whenever there is an opportunity, take upon yourself any work that will relieve another.

Do not think that this will cost you nothing, and that you will find everything done. Remember what his love for us cost our Spouse, and that to set us free from death, he died such a painful death as the death of the Cross.

#### Chapter IV

*Continues the same subject, explaining further this kind of prayer; the Saint points out how important it is for us to be watchful, because the devil will make every effort to dissuade the soul from continuing the work that she has begun.*

You seem to be anxious to know what has become of that little butterfly, and where she has settled, for it is evident that neither spiritual consolations, nor earthly pleasures will satisfy her. Her flight is higher, and I cannot fulfil your desire until the last Mansion is reached. Please God that I may remember, and find opportunity to write about it then, for nearly five months have passed since I commenced this. The state of my head is not such that I can re-read what I have written, so I fear that

\* *Way of Perfection. Chaps. V, VII, VIII.*

everything is in disorder, and perhaps I have said some things twice over, but as it is for my Sisters, this is of little moment.

At the same time, I want to explain to you more fully in what it seems to me this prayer of union consists; according to my ability, I will make use of a similitude. Afterwards we will say something further about the little butterfly, which will not settle, because it finds no true repose, though it is always fruitfully occupied in doing good to itself and to other souls.

You must often have heard that God spiritually espouses souls; blessed be his mercy, that he wills so to humble himself, and though it is a gross similitude, I cannot find another that explains so well what I mean, as the sacrament of matrimony. For though in a different manner, because in what we are discussing, there is nothing that is not purely spiritual (the corporeal is very far removed from it, and the spiritual delights which the Lord gives, and the satisfactions of the married state, are a thousand leagues removed from one another), for all is Love meeting love, and his operations being most pure, most subtle and sweet, are indescribable, yet the Lord makes them very distinctly felt.

It seems to me that at present, union has not gone so far as the spiritual betrothal, but as when here below there is a question of marriage between two people, they have to discover whether they agree, and what each one wishes, and the better to satisfy themselves, they may even meet; thus it is now with the soul. I will suppose that the agreement is already made; the soul knows very well how fortunate she is, and she is resolved to accomplish fully the will of her Spouse, and to do everything possible to please him. His Majesty, who is well-acquainted with her dispositions, is satisfied with her, and in his mercy, he wishes that she shall know him better, that as they say, they may have an interview, and come together. We may express it thus, but all happens in a very brief space of time. Here it is not a question of giving and taking, but the soul sees in a secret manner, who is this Spouse with whom she is to be united. The senses and powers, even in a thousand years, could in no wise grasp what the soul sees in a flash.

The Spouse, being who he is, leaves the soul, even after a single visit, far more worthy that he should, as we say, give her his hand, and she, on her side, is now so enamoured, that she does everything she can that this divine betrothal may not be frustrated.

But if this soul grow careless, and set her affection on something alien to her Spouse, she loses everything, and this loss is as great as are the favours he was bestowing upon her, much greater, indeed, then it is possible to say.

Therefore, Christian souls, who have been conducted thus far by the Lord, I beg you for his sake, not to be careless, but to avoid occasions of sin, for even at this stage, the soul is not so strong that she can safely plunge into them, as she will be when the betrothal is accomplished. This takes place in the mansion which we shall speak of after this one, but at present, the Lord has paid her but one visit, and the devil strives hard to undo its effects, and to ward off this betrothal, if he can.

Afterwards, when he sees the soul completely surrendered to the Spouse, he is not so daring, because he fears her, and knows by experience



that if once he attacks, he may sustain great loss, and she derive much profit.

I tell you, daughters, that I have known highly spiritual persons who have reached this state, and the devil, by his great craftiness and strategy, has gained them again for himself. He will unite all hell for this purpose, because as I have said many times before, he knows of old that such persons cause him to lose, not one soul only, but a great multitude. This is confirmed by the multitude of souls who, by means of one, God draws to himself, and greatly to be praised is he for the thousands whom the martyrs convert. A young girl such as Saint Ursula, for instance! Then how many has the devil lost through Saint Dominic, Saint Francis, and other founders of Orders, and he is losing still by Father Ignatius, who has founded the Company of Jesus. It is clear, and we read, that all these received those favours from God which we are discussing. How was it, but that they made supreme efforts not to forfeit by their own fault, such divine betrothal?

Oh, my daughters, this Lord is just as ready to grant us this favour now as he was then, and in a sense, there is greater need that we should wish to receive it, because they are fewer who seek his glory now, than there were then. We are great lovers of ourselves; we are so very prudent in the matter of losing our rights. Oh, what a delusion this is! May the Lord in his mercy give us light, that we may not fall into such darkness!

You might ask me, or be in doubt about two things: first, that if the soul be so conformed to the will of God as I have said, how can she be deceived, since she does not wish to do her own will in anything? Secondly, by what means can the devil enter your soul so dangerously that you may be lost, since you are so separated from the world, you frequent the Sacraments, and we may even say, that you are in the company of the angels, while, by the goodness of the Lord, none of you has any other desire but to serve and please him? It is rather different with those who are in the world, and immersed in occasions of sin.

You are right, and God has shown us great mercy, but when I see, as I have said, that Judas was in the company of the Apostles, and always conversing with God himself, and listening to his words, I realise that there is no security in this.

In reply to the first question, I say, that if a soul were always attached to the will of God, it is clear that she would not be lost, but the devil comes with great cunning, and, under colour of well-doing, he manages to discredit small observances, and to encourage others, which he represents as not being wrong, and thus, little by little, he obscures the understanding, chills the will, and fosters self-love in the soul, until, by one means or another, he succeeds in detaching her from the will of God, and binding her to his own.

My answer to the first question applies to the second, for there is no enclosure so strict, that the devil cannot enter, and no desert so solitary but he is there. And I may even say further, that perhaps the Lord allow him this freedom, in order to see how that soul whom he wishes to set as a light to others, will acquit herself. If she be imperfect, it is better that this should appear at the beginning, than when she may do harm to many.

Diligence seems to me to be the most important thing, next to constant prayer to God that he will uphold us with his hand, remembering always that if he forsook us, we should sink down to hell. This is true, and we must never trust in ourselves; it would be foolish to do so, and we should walk with the greatest circumspection and deliberation, taking note of the progress we are making in the exercise of virtue; whether we are improving or failing in some way, especially in our love for one another, in the desire to be accounted as the least, or in our daily duties, for, pondering over these things, and asking the Lord to give us his light, we shall soon see what are our gains and our losses.

But do not think that God, who has raised the soul to this estate, will let her drop so easily from his hand, that the devil will not have hard work to re-capture her. His Majesty is so grieved to see that he may lose her, that he gives her a thousand secret warnings of all kinds, so that she cannot be unaware of the risk she is running.

In short, to conclude, let us strive always to advance, for if we do not, there is great cause to fear, since without any doubt, the devil is planning some assault upon us. When a soul has reached thus far, it should be impossible not to continue to progress, for love is never idle, and to be so would be an extremely bad sign. The soul who has aspired to be the spouse of God himself, and has already had intimate relations with his Majesty, and has arrived at the goal we have described, must not throw herself down to sleep.

So that you may see, daughters, how he acts towards those whom he has already espoused, let us begin to speak of the sixth Mansions, and you will realise how little is all that we can do and suffer to prepare ourselves for such great favours. It may be that our Lord has ordained that I should be told to write this, so that fixing our eyes on the reward, and seeing how infinite is his mercy, since he wills thus to communicate with poor little worms, and to show himself to them, we may forget our trivial earthly pleasures, and fastening our gaze on his greatness, we may run our course all on fire with his love.

May it please him that I succeed in explaining some of these obscure matters, for if his Majesty and the Holy Spirit do not guide my pen, I well know that it will be impossible, and if it is not to be for your profit, I beg him that I may not succeed in saying anything. His Majesty knows that I have no other desire, so far as I understand myself, but that his holy name be praised, and that we constrain ourselves to serve a Lord who rewards so richly even here on earth.

By this we know something of what he intends to give us in heaven, without the interruptions, trials and dangers that there are on this stormy sea. But for the dread we are in of losing or offending him, we should find repose in living until the end of the world, to work for so great a God and Lord and Spouse. May it please his Majesty that we may be worthy to render him some service, without so many faults as we always have, even in our good works!

## SIXTH MANSIONS

*Chapter I*

*The Saint shows how, in proportion as the Lord accords greater favours, he sends also more severe trials. She indicates some of these, and speaks of the manner in which they are borne by those who have reached this Mansion. This chapter is helpful to those who suffer interiorly.*

Now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we shall speak of the sixth Mansions, where the soul dwells who is already wounded with love of the Spouse. She endeavours to find greater opportunity to be alone, to rid herself of everything,—so far as she can, in accordance with her state,—that is likely to disturb her solitude. His aspect is so deeply engraven in the soul, that her one desire is to enjoy his presence again. I have already said that in this prayer, nothing is seen, that may be said to be seen, even in the imagination. I say ‘aspect’ in accordance with my metaphor.

The soul is now fully resolved to take no other spouse, but the heavenly Spouse takes no notice of the ardent desire she has to conclude the betrothal. He wishes that she shall desire it still more earnestly, and that it shall cost her something, since it is of all possessions the most precious. And though all is little where so immense a privilege is at stake, I tell you, daughters, that the glimpse and token that she has already had of it, are none the less necessary to enable her to endure. Oh, great God, what interior and exterior trials she must suffer before she will enter the seventh Mansion! Certainly, sometimes, when I consider them, I fear that if they had been foreseen, it would be most difficult to persuade our natural weakness to embrace and to resolve to suffer them, however great the benefits in store, unless we had already reached the seventh Mansion.

There, fear is at an end, for the soul is fully prepared to suffer everything for God. The reason for this is, that she is then almost always closely united with his Majesty, and this union gives her strength.

I think that it may be well to mention some of the trials certain to be met with at this point. Perhaps all souls will not be required to suffer in this way, but I doubt very much whether any soul that enjoys in time what are truly heavenly consolations, will escape earthly trials of one kind or another.

Though I had not intended to speak of this, I think that some soul who may find herself in such case, will be greatly comforted to learn what those to whom the Lord grants the like favours have to suffer, for truly it may seem to her, otherwise, that all is lost.

I shall not mention these trials in any consecutive order, but as they occur to my memory, and I will commence with the least.

An outcry is made against a person by those with whom she has to do, and even by some with whom she has nothing to do, nor does it seem that they should concern themselves with her in any way. They say that she sets herself up as a saint, and makes a show of piety to deceive the world,



and to discredit others, who are better Christians than herself without such an exhibition! Yet, note that this person makes no show beyond what is required by the duties of her state. Those who were her friends forsake her, and they are those who are the most bitter, and who make her suffer most.

They say that she has lost her soul, and is obviously deceived by the devil, that she resembles such and such a disgraceful person, that she is a stumbling block, and misleads her confessors. They go to them and tell them so, giving instances of persons who have been lost by similar ways, with many such-like tales, and jeers.

I know of a person who had a distressing fear that she would not find anyone to confess to, things had come to such a pass with her, and her trials were so many, that I will not enumerate them. The worst of it is, that they do not end quickly, but last throughout the whole life, and people warn one another not to have anything to do with such a person.

You may suggest that there are others who speak well of her. Oh, daughters, and how few believe them in comparison with the many who hate her! Moreover, this is a more severe trial than those I have spoken of, because the soul sees clearly that if there is any good in her it is from God, and is in no way her own, for but a short while ago, she was quite poverty-stricken, and plunged in serious sins. This is an intolerable torment, at least at the beginning, but later on, not so much, for several reasons. First, because experience shows clearly that people as readily speak good as evil, and thus she learns to value one no more than the other.

Secondly, because the Lord gives her greater light to see that nothing good is her own, but his Majesty's gift, and as if she saw it in a third person, forgetful of any part that she may have in it, she turns to the Lord to praise him for it.

Thirdly, if she has seen any souls benefited by the favours God has granted to her, she believes that his Majesty sought to do them good by making her to appear good, in spite of her imperfection.

Fourthly, as she places the honour and glory of God before her own, she is free of the temptation that beginners experience, by which such praises might ruin her, as she has seen in some. Equally, she cares little about being treated with contempt, if, in exchange, God be praised on her account, come what may come afterwards.

These and other considerations modify the real pain that praise gives her, though usually some pain is felt, unless the soul has ceased to notice either praise or blame. The trial is incomparably greater when she sees herself held in unmerited public esteem, than when censures are meted out to her, but when she has become indifferent to praise, she is still more so to contempt; in fact, this pleases her, and is as sweet music in her ears. This is quite true, and it strengthens the soul rather than discourages her, for already experience has taught her how much she has to gain by this road. It does not seem to her that those who persecute her offend God, but rather that his Majesty permits it for her greater good. Seeing this so clearly, she feels a tender love towards them, and regards them as her best friends, for they do her more good than those who speak well of her.



The Lord is also wont to send serious illness. This is a very great trial, especially when there is acute suffering, and if the pains are violent, it seems to me that there is scarcely any trial on earth that is so searching. I am speaking of exterior sufferings, though if they are very great, they penetrate the whole being, decomposing, as it were, both interior and exterior, and the soul is so straitened that she does not know what to do with herself. She would very gladly accept any kind of quick martyrdom than these sufferings, though in their most acute form, they do not last long, for, in fact, God inflicts no more than we are able to bear, and he first grants patience to endure them. Generally speaking, however, at this stage, he sends many trials and various kinds of infirmities.

I know a person, who, since our Lord began to grant her the favour described above, for forty years could not say with truth that she was a single day without pain, and other kinds of suffering,—want of physical health, I mean, without speaking of other great trials. It is true that she had been very wicked, and compared with the hell she deserved, every trial seemed light.

Our Lord leads by another way those who have not offended him so deeply, but I would always choose the way of suffering, if only to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, and it had no other advantages; but especially when there are so many others. Oh, then, if we speak of interior trials! Could we succeed in describing them, others would appear insignificant, but it is impossible to give any idea of them.

Let us commence with the torment caused by having to treat with a confessor, who is so cautious and inexperienced that nothing seems to him to be safe that is at all out of the ordinary; everything frightens him, and he is doubtful of everything. This is especially the case if he sees any imperfection in his penitent, for it seems to him that those to whom God shows these favours must be angels, and as this is impossible while we are in the body, everything is put down to the devil or melancholy. I am not surprised, for the world is full of such cases, and the devil does so much harm in this way, that the confessors have very good reason to fear him, and to be on the look-out for him. But the poor soul who is suffering from the same fear, and goes to the confessor as to a judge, if he condemn her, is thrown into great uncertainty and torment, and only those who have experienced the same thing can understand how great a trial it is.

Then, keen suffering is also caused to these souls by the thought that God is allowing them to be deceived on account of their sins, and though when his Majesty favours them, they are re-assured, and cannot be brought to believe that they have mistaken some other spirit for God, yet, as the favour passes quickly, and the recollection of their sins is always with them, while fresh sins never fail to trouble them, they are once more plunged into doubt. When the confessor encourages them, the torment is assuaged, though it may return; but when he adds to their fears, it is an almost insupportable trial, especially when in the midst of it, aridities descend on the soul, and it seems to her that she has never thought of God, nor will ever be able to do so, and hearing his Majesty spoken of, it is as if he were a person of whom she has heard long ago.

Still, even this is nothing in comparison with the sense of inability they

have to explain matters to the confessors; they imagine that they are deceiving them, and although they think and see, that they have not had a first movement that they have not confessed, they are not at rest. The understanding is so obscured, that they are incapable of seeing the truth, and they believe whatever the imagination presents to them. Thus it becomes the master, and the follies that the devil, who is permitted by God thus to prove them, wishes them to believe, even persuading them that they are reprobate, and trying them in many other ways, cause an interior struggle of such an arduous and intolerable kind, that I do not know to what I can compare it, unless it were to the pains of hell, for no consolation is granted in this tempest.

If they wish to consult a confessor, the demons seem to have turned him against them, and he torments them more than ever. A confessor, speaking to a person who had been in this torture, when it was past, said to her that it seemed to be a dangerous kind of conflict, in view of the combined elements in it, and he told her to warn him when next she was assailed, but she was always so much worse, that he came to the conclusion that she could not help herself. She knew well how to read, but if she took up a book in the vulgar tongue, she could no more understand it than if she were quite uneducated, because her mind was incapacitated.

In fact, there is no other remedy in this tempest, than to wait upon God's mercy, and when least expected, by a single word of his, or some unforeseen occurrence, he suddenly dispels every cloud, and the soul seems never to have been obscured, it is now so full of sunshine, and more deeply consoled than ever before. As one who has come off victoriously in a dangerous conflict, the soul continues in praise to our Lord, for it was he who fought for victory. She sees very clearly that she did not fight, for all the arms with which she might have defended herself seemed to her to be in the hands of the enemy. Thus her misery is brought home to her, and the paucity of our resources if the Lord should forsake us.

To realise this, no other consideration seems to be necessary, for the experience gained in this trial has shown the soul its total disablement, and made her understand our nothingness and what miserable creatures we are. Grace, of which she cannot be deprived, for with all this torment she has not offended God, nor would she offend him for anything in the world, is yet so hidden, that it does not seem to her that she has, or has ever had, the least spark of the love of God. If she has ever done any good, or his Majesty has shown her some favour, all this appears as a dream or mere fancy; as for her sins, she sees that she has certainly committed them.

Oh, Jesus, what a thing it is to see a soul forsaken in this manner, and as I have said, how little use is any earthly consolation! Therefore, Sisters, do not think that the rich and those who have their liberty have any better remedy than you at such a time. No, no, and it seems to me, that for myself, it would be as if worldly pleasures were set before the damned; they would not afford them any relief, but on the contrary, they would aggravate their torment. The sufferings of this soul come from above, and nothing on earth can avail to assuage them. This great God wishes us to recognise his Kingship and our misery, and it is very important, if

we are to advance.

Now what can this poor soul do when many days pass thus? If she prays, it is as if she did not pray, for all the consolation that it affords her, I mean; interiorly, she receives none, nor does she even understand herself the prayer she is making, though it may be vocal; as for mental prayer of any kind, at such a time, it is out of the question, for her powers are not equal to it. Solitude is, indeed, extremely bad for her, while at the same time, it is a fresh torment to be with anyone, and to be obliged to speak. Thus, in spite of the supreme efforts she makes, her depression and unhappy state are very evident. Truly, she cannot say what is the matter with her. It is indescribable, for it is impossible to give a name to spiritual anguish and sufferings.

The best remedy, I do not say to rid herself of them, for I do not know of any such, but to render her state bearable, is to engage in works of charity and other exterior business, and to hope in the mercy of God, for he never fails those who trust in him. May he be for ever blessed. Amen.

Other exterior trials which are caused by the devil are not so common, and therefore we need not speak of them, nor are they anything like so painful. However severe they may be, they do not paralyse the powers in the same way, nor, to my mind, do they disturb the soul so much as do the others. We have reason to think that the demons cannot do more than the Lord grants them permission to do, and when the mind is not afflicted, every other trial is slight in comparison.

We will go on to speak of other interior trials in these Mansions, when we are discussing different kinds of prayer and graces granted by the Lord. Though some of these trials are even harder to bear than those that have been in question, as may be seen by their effects on the body, they do not, however, deserve the name of trials, and it should not be given to them, for they are very exalted favours from the Lord, which the soul recognises to be such at the moment of receiving them, and she acknowledges how very far she is from deserving them.

This intense suffering, with very many other pains, comes when the soul is about to enter the seventh Mansions. I will speak of some of these experiences, but to mention all will be impossible, or even to describe their nature. They have not the same origin as those we have spoken of, but are of a very much higher order, and if I have been unable clearly to explain those of an inferior type, how much less shall I be able to do justice to the higher. May the Lord grant his grace for everything, through the merits of his Son. Amen.

## Chapter II

*The Saint describes some methods by which the Lord awakens the soul; in spite of the exalted nature of this experience, there is nothing to fear in it, and it is a very great favour.*

We seem to have left the butterfly far behind, but yet we have not done



so, for these very trials are intended to help her to a higher flight. Now let us begin to speak of the ways of the Spouse with the soul, and of how, before he becomes hers entirely, he enkindles her desire. He uses such delicate means, that the soul herself does not understand them, nor can I hope to succeed in making them understood by anyone who has not experience of them. They are impulses which proceed from the very centre of the soul, and are of so delicate and subtle a nature, that I do not know of any comparison by which to give an idea of them.

They are very different from anything that we can acquire for ourselves, and even from those gusts that have been described. Very often the person herself is taken at unawares, and when she is not even thinking of God, suddenly his Majesty awakens her, after the manner of a comet that flashes past us, or a clap of thunder, and though she hears no noise, she knows that God has called her. She understands so well, that sometimes, especially at first, it causes her to tremble, and even to lament, without there being any cause for grief.

She feels herself deliciously wounded, though she cannot discover how, nor by whom ; but she is well aware that it is a precious wound, of which she will never wish to be healed. She cannot help complaining to her Spouse, even speaking aloud some loving words, for she is conscious of his presence, and that he will not manifest himself, so that she may rejoice in seeing him; this, though sweet and delightful, is a grievous trial. And though she might wish to be without it, she could not, but this she would never wish. It satisfies her much more deeply than the sweet inebriation of the prayer of quiet, which is free from pain.

I am striving, Sisters, to give you some idea of this operation of divine love, but I do not know how, because it seems to be a contradiction to say, that the Beloved is manifestly with the soul, and yet that he is calling her. He appears to do so by a signal so definite that it cannot be mistaken, a penetrating, sibilant sound, which the soul cannot fail to understand, and cannot help hearing. In this way, the Spouse, without uttering formal words, makes known that he is in the seventh Mansion, and the inhabitants of the other Mansions, the senses, the imagination, and the powers do not dare to stir.

O Almighty God, how profound are thy secrets! and how different are the things of the spirit, from anything that we can see or understand here below! No earthly thing serves to illustrate even this favour, slight though it is compared with the very great things that thou dost work in souls. However, it produces so powerful an effect that the soul is overcome with desire, and she knows not what to ask for, since it seems very evident to her that her God is with her.

You will ask me, if this be so, what does she desire more? and what is it that gives her pain? What greater good does she expect? I do not know, I only know that this pain seems to penetrate to her heart's very core, and when he who has wounded her withdraws the shaft, it seems verily as if he were drawing out her heart also, so overpowering is the sentiment of her love.\*

\* *Life. Chap. XXIX. In which the Saint describes the piercing of her heart by an angel.*



I have been thinking today, that possibly, some little spark leaps forth from the fire of the burning brazier that is my God, and falling on the soul, makes her feel that glowing fire, but as it is not enough to consume her, she remains with that delicious pain, which the touch of the burning spark has produced. This seems to be the best simile that I can find, because this sweet pain—and it is not really pain—is not stable: though sometimes it lasts a long while, at other times, it is quickly over, according to the Lord's desire of communicating with her. It is not a thing which can be procured by any human means; sometimes the favour is prolonged, it is withdrawn and given again; in fact, it is never stationary, and therefore it does not wholly enkindle the soul. When it seems about to do so, the spark dies out, and the soul is left longing for a return of the sweet pain that it causes her.

There is no occasion here to question whether this experience arises from some natural cause, or is the result of melancholy, or to fear that it is a deception of the devil, or an illusion, because this motion is plainly seen to emanate from the dwelling place of the Lord, who is immutable. The effects produced by this motion are not the inebriation caused by other experiences, whose very sweetness makes us doubtful. Here, all the senses and powers, without any inebriation, are intent on what is taking place, without hindering at all, or being able in any way, it seems to me, either to increase or to deprive the soul of that delicious pain.

Those to whom our Lord may have shown this favour, and, who, having received it, on reading this, grasp its significance, should give him heartfelt thanks, for no deception is to be feared here, but they have much to fear if they be ungrateful for so great a grace, and they should endeavour with all their might to serve him, and to amend their lives in every way, and then they will see how God will go on granting them more and more.

A person whom I knew,\* enjoyed this favour for some years, and she was so well satisfied with it, that she felt she would be amply repaid even if she were obliged to pass endless years in great trials in the service of the Lord. May he be blessed for ever. Amen.

You may have remarked that I said that there is less likelihood of deception in this experience than in others. The reasons for this seem to be: first, that the devil never causes such a delicious pain. He may be able to give sweetness and delight that appear to be spiritual, but to unite pain, and such pain, with tranquillity and joy in the soul, this is quite beyond him. His powers are exercised on the exterior only, and his pains, when he gives them, are never, to my thinking, either delicious or accompanied by peace, but by disturbance and conflict. Secondly, this pleasant storm comes from another region than that over which he rules. Thirdly, the great benefits that are bestowed on the soul. Usually, she is resolved to suffer for God, and she longs for trials; she becomes much more firmly determined to give up worldly satisfactions, and conversation, and similar things. That these could not be the effect of delusion is very clear, and though sometimes the devil creates it, he cannot counterfeit what has been

\* *The Saint herself.*

described. Besides, the favour is so manifest, that it can in no way be imagined, I mean it cannot seem to be when it is not, nor can there be doubt as to its nature, for if there were, it was not genuine, that is, if the soul doubts whether she experienced it or not, because it is as clearly perceived as the sound of a loud voice.

Neither can these impressions be attributed to melancholy, because the delusions of melancholy are conjured up, and exist only in the imagination: what we are discussing proceeds from the interior of the soul. I may be mistaken, but until I hear arguments to the contrary, I shall hold to this opinion. Also, I know a person who is very much afraid of such-like deceptions, but of this prayer she could never feel any fear.

Our Lord is wont also to use other means of awakening the soul. Sometimes, when praying vocally, and inattentive to her interior, quite unexpectedly, a person may find herself a prey to a sweet emotion, as if a strong perfume or something of the kind suddenly pervaded her, communicating itself to all the senses, (I do not say that it is a perfume, but I make this comparison), solely to make known to her that the Spouse is there. The soul is inspired with a sweet desire to enjoy this presence, and she is left with an ardent disposition to do great things for our Lord, and to render praise to him.

The source of this favour is the same as that of the burning spark of which I have spoken, but here there is nothing to cause pain, nor are the desires of the soul to enjoy God, painful. This is the most usual experience in this state. Neither does it seem to me that there is here anything to fear, for reasons that I have already expressed, but the soul has only to receive this favour with thanksgiving.

### Chapter III

*Continues the same subject, and describes the manner in which, when he is pleased to do so, God speaks to the soul; gives advice how to act, and not to follow our own opinion with regard to these locutions; the Saint gives several signs by which it may be known when they are not genuine, and when they are. The chapter is extremely useful.*

God has another way of awaking the soul, and though it seems, in a manner, to be a greater favour than the preceding, it can become more dangerous, and for this reason, I will pause to explain it fully. God has various ways of speaking to the soul; some words seem to come from without, others from the depths of the soul, others from above, and still others are so exterior as to be heard with the ears, as if spoken by a voice. Sometimes, and even frequently, the person may be deceived, especially if she be of a weak imagination and melancholic, I mean, decidedly melancholy. Little importance should be attached to what these two types of persons may say, when they speak of seeing, hearing, and understanding, nor should they be made uneasy by being told that their experiences come from the devil. The best way is to listen as to a sick person, and the

Prioress or confessor, to whom they may speak should tell them to pay no heed to the locutions, as they are not pertinent to the service of God, and by such means, many people have been deceived by the devil. But so as not unduly to cross their humour, they may be told that perhaps, in their case, it is not so.

If they be told that their experience arises from melancholy, they will persist that they have seen and heard this and this, because it seems so to them. Nevertheless, it is necessary to insist that they give up prayer, and so far as possible, that they pay no attention to their experiences, for the devil is wont to make use of these souls who are thus incapacitated, if not to ruin them, to do harm to others. Both sick and whole must always regard these things with suspicion, until their source is known. And I maintain that it is always better in the beginning to ignore them: if they are from God, this will help our progress, and besides, these favours increase when they are thus tested. This is so, but the soul should not be too much restrained or disquieted, because truly, she cannot help it.

Now returning to what I was saying about interior words, all the various kinds that I have mentioned may be from God, but also, they may be from the devil, or from one's own imagination. I will speak, if I can achieve it with the help of the Lord, about the signs by which these very different sources may be distinguished, and point out when these locutions are likely to be dangerous. Among prayerful people, there are many who hear them, and I do not wish, Sisters, that you should think that you are doing wrong in not giving them credence, or on the other hand, in giving it, when they are only for your own consolation, or to warn you of your faults, for then, whoever may be their author, and whether or not they are an illusion, matters little. Of one thing I warn you, and that is, that you do not imagine, even though they be from God, that you are holier for hearing them, for he spoke frequently to the Pharisees, and we are only better in so far as we profit by these words.

If they are not in perfect agreement with the Scriptures, pay no more attention to them, than if you heard them from the devil himself.

Even if they arise from your weak imagination, such words must be regarded as a temptation against the truths of the Faith, and in this light, always resist them, so that they cease to trouble you; and they *will* cease, for there is very little force in them.

Now, to repeat what I said at first: these locutions may come from the interior, or the superior part of the soul, or they may be heard exteriorly, yet all alike may come from God. The most reliable signs we can have are, I think, these. First and most certain, the power and authority they carry with them: they are both words and deeds. I will explain further. We will suppose a soul in all the affliction and interior disturbance that I have described; her mind is obscured, her soul dry; yet, at one word such as: "Fear not," she recovers her tranquility, and she finds herself enlightened, and relieved of all her former anxieties, though it had previously seemed to her that all the world and all the theologians put together could not reason her out of them, nor could they, persevere as they might, free her from that affliction.

Another person is afflicted because her confessors and others have



told her that she is possessed by the devil, and she is filled with fear. But by one word only that is spoken to her: "It is I, be not afraid," she is rid of everything, supremely consoled, and it seems to her that nothing could possibly make her think otherwise (than that the words came from God.) Another is in great anxiety over some important business, and she does not know how it will turn out. She is given to understand that she should be calm, and that everything will succeed well; confidence takes the place of anxiety, and thus it happens in many other things.

The second sign is the great calm that floods the soul, a deep and peaceful recollection, with a disposition to praise God. O Lord! if a single word given to one of thy pages to speak,—for it is said that in these mansions, at least, the Lord himself does not speak, but an angel,—has such force, what will be the effect on the soul of being united in love with thee, and thou with her?

The third sign by which to recognise that these words are from God is that they do not pass out of the memory for a long time, as do those that we hear here below, I mean, and some of them never do. The words that we hear men speak, though they may be very weighty and learned, are not deeply engraven in the memory, and if they concern things to come we do not believe them as we do these. The words that come from God leave behind them so deep a conviction, that even when they concern seemingly impossible things, they do not permit of any doubt as to whether such events will happen or not. The mind may vacillate, but in the soul herself, there is a certainty which she cannot abandon. Though everything may seem to go contrary to the prophecy that she has heard, and years pass by, she cannot cease to think that God will find a means of realising it which men do not foresee, and that in the end it will be fulfilled, as indeed it is. Though, as I said, it is impossible not to suffer at seeing so many difficulties, at first, the soul is ready to die for the truth of her experience, for when the words were spoken, the effects and conviction that they left behind stamped them as coming from God. With the passage of time, however, doubts arise as to whether, after all, they might not be the work of the devil or of the imagination, and the devil causes these doubts, in order to trouble and discourage the soul, especially when a work is in question which he realises will do much good to souls, and is for the greater honour and service of God, and presents much difficulty. What will he not do to stop it? At least he weakens faith, and it is a serious matter not to believe that God is sufficiently powerful to accomplish works that are beyond our understanding. Yet with all this strife, and though the confessors whom she consults tell this person that the words she has heard are nonsense, while there are many adverse indications concerning their fulfilment, she retains a lively spark of conviction that they will be realised. Though all other hopes may be dead, the devil cannot, much as he may wish, extinguish that little spark of conviction. Finally, as I have said, the Lord's word is fulfilled, and the soul is so pleased and merry, that she wishes to give unceasing praise to his Majesty, and much more because she sees the realisation of his word, than for the work itself, though it may be of great importance to her interests.

I do not know why the soul is so concerned with the fulfilment of these



words. If she were detected in a falsehood, I do not believe that she would feel it so much as any failure in these promises. As if she could do otherwise than refrain from saying anything but what was said to her? A certain person has been reminded a thousand times of the prophet Jonah, who feared that Niniveh was not to be destroyed.\* In point of fact, as the Spirit of God inspired those words, it was right to show this fidelity, and to desire that they should not be regarded as false, since he is the supreme Truth. Thus, great is the joy of the soul, when, after countless set-backs and difficulties, she sees the prophecy fulfilled. This person felt that if, in consequence, she had to suffer great trials, she would much prefer to endure them than not to see the fulfilment of what she was convinced the Lord had said to her. Perhaps everyone is not afflicted with this weakness, if weakness it be, though I cannot condemn it as wrong.

If the words are formed in the imagination, there are none of these signs, neither is there conviction, nor peace and interior joy. However, it may happen, and I actually know some persons to whom it has happened, that when they are deeply absorbed in the prayer of quiet and spiritual slumber, (and some are so weak of temperament or imagination or I know not what may be the cause, but truly, in this deep recollection they are out of themselves; they are lost to everything exterior, and all their senses are asleep as in a person who is sleeping, and they may perhaps even be asleep!) in a kind of dream, it seems to them that they are spoken to, they even see things, and they think that everything is from God, but, in fact, their effects are those of a dream.

It may also happen that a person who asks our Lord lovingly for something, may imagine that he answers her according to her wishes, and this actually happens sometimes. But anyone who has had much experience of divine locutions, cannot, in my opinion, be deceived by the imagination.

From the devil, there is more to fear, but if there are the signs that I have mentioned, there is reason for confidence that the words are from God. Yet if they concern some serious matter, some work of our own, or business with third persons, we should never do anything nor entertain the thought of it, without laying the whole matter before a learned and prudent confessor and a servant of God, even though more and more locutions are heard, and it seems to be clear that they are from God. This is what his Majesty wishes, and it is not putting aside his commands, for he has told us that the confessor stands in his place, and thus we cannot doubt that his advice will be from God.

This helps to give courage, if the affair be a difficult one, and when he wishes, the Lord will show the confessor, and will make him believe that it is his own Spirit, and if not, you have no further obligation. To take any other course than this, and to follow our own opinion in such a case, I believe to be very dangerous, and so, Sisters, I admonish you on our Lord's behalf, never to act thus. There is another way that the Lord has of speaking to the soul, which seems plainly to distinguish the words as coming from Him. They are accompanied by an intellectual vision,

\* *Jonas IV, 1.*

of which I will say more later. This takes place in the most intimate depths of the soul, and the words are heard so clearly by the ear of the soul, and are so secret, while the very manner of understanding them, together with the effects of the vision, re-assure and give conviction that the devil can have no part in the experience. The remarkable effects that follow encourage this belief, and at least it is certain that it did not proceed from the imagination. On reflection, this may always be ascertained, for the following reasons:

First, because of the distinctness of the locution, which is so clear that if a syllable be missing, it is remembered, and so are the exact words used, even though a whole sentence be spoken. Words which are framed by the imagination are not so clear or so distinct, but are half-articulated as in a dream.

Secondly, because very frequently the locution concerns something about which we were not thinking, it comes suddenly, even sometimes during conversation, though it may very well be a response to a passing thought, or to something previously thought of. Very frequently, however, the locution concerns something which we do not remember to have thought of as possible or likely. Therefore, the imagination could not have fabricated it, to deceive the soul with a delusion regarding things which she had not desired nor sought, nor had they ever occurred to her.

Thirdly, when the words are from God, the hearer listens, but when they come from the imagination they are spoken one by one, as if they were being composed at the will of the hearer.

Fourthly, because the words are very different, and one comprises much more than our intelligence could grasp at once.

Fifthly, because frequently, in a manner that I cannot describe, the words are accompanied by a comprehension of much more than they actually mean. I shall speak again of this mode of understanding, which is very delicate, and something for which to praise the Lord. There must be some people who are very doubtful about these and other different kinds of locutions. I know one especially, who has suffered in this way, and there must be others who are unable to understand their nature. This person has, I know, given long consideration to the matter, because our Lord has often granted her this favour, and in the beginning, she was in great doubt whether or no she was giving way to fancy, for the devil she could more readily detect. Though his tricks are many, and he knows well how to imitate the spirit of light, yet, to my thinking, he is betrayed by his words. He may pronounce them very clearly, so as to create a doubt whether they proceed from the spirit of truth, but he cannot imitate the effects already described, nor produce in the soul the same peace and light, but on the contrary, disquiet and conflict. He can, however, do little harm, or none at all, if the soul be humble, and will do what I have advised, which is, not to stir to do anything, because of what she has heard.

If favours and delights seem to be granted by the Lord, mark well whether you are the better for them, and if in proportion as the words are more tender, you do not find yourself in greater confusion, do not believe that it is a Spirit from God. For when it is, it is very

evident that the greater the favour, the less regard the soul has for herself, the more vividly she recalls her sins, the more forgetful she is of her own interest, the more her will and her memory are intent on honouring God alone, without any thought of her own profit; the more fearful she is of following her own will in anything, and the more convinced she is that she in no way deserves these favours, but that hell should rather be her portion.

So long as all the graces and favours received during our prayer have these effects, the soul should not be afraid, but confident in the mercy of the Lord, who is faithful, and will not permit that the devil should deceive her, though it is wise always to walk in fear. It is possible that to those whom the Lord does not lead by this way, it may appear that these souls need not listen to the words that are said to them, and that they should distract themselves in such a way as not to hear them, and thus they would avoid these dangers.

To these, I reply that it is impossible. I am not speaking of those who are deceived by their imagination, for if they were less desirous of certain experiences, and would disdain fancies, they would find a cure. But not for divine locutions, because the same spirit who speaks checks every other thought, and forces us to pay attention to what he is saying, and in such wise, that it seems to me that it would be more possible to a person who hears very well not to hear someone who is shouting, for she could refuse to listen, and could keep her mind and understanding fixed on something else, but in what we are speaking of, this could not be done.

There are no ears to stop, nor is there power to think of anything whatever but what is said, for he who had power to make the sun stand still—I believe it was in response to Josue's prayer\*—can arrest the powers and the whole interior working of the soul, in such a way that she plainly sees that a greater Lord than she governs the Castle, and she is filled with devotion and humility; it is therefore utterly impossible to excuse herself from hearing, when he speaks. May the divine Majesty give us grace that our sole aim may be to please him, and let us forget ourselves, as I have said. Please God that I have succeeded in explaining what I wished, and that it may be of some use to those whom it concerns.

#### Chapter IV

*The Saint speaks of how the Lord interrupts the soul in prayer by a ravishment, ecstasy or rapture, which are one and the same thing, in her opinion; and how great courage is necessary for the reception of such exalted favours from his Majesty.*

With all the aforesaid trials, and others besides, what repose can the poor little butterfly find? All these troubles only increase her desire for

\* Josue X, 12, 13.



the Spouse, and his Majesty, who knows our weakness, by such means, and many others, continues to strengthen her courage to unite herself with so great a Lord, and to take him as her Bridegroom.

You may laugh because I say this, and think that I am foolish, for none of you considers that courage is necessary, since no woman could be so faint-hearted as not to be brave enough to espouse herself to the King. This may be true with regard to an earthly king, but when the King of heaven is in question, I tell you that more courage is needed than you think. Our nature is very timid and despicable for so great an enterprise, and I am sure that if God does not give us courage, it will be impossible to us, desirable as you may consider this favour to be, and as indeed it is.

You will see what his Majesty does to conclude this betrothal. In my opinion, this is when he so enraptures the soul that the person is deprived of consciousness; if it were retained, to see this great Majesty so near might make it impossible to live. I am speaking of a genuine rapture, and not merely some experience due to womanly weakness, which we may mistake for rapture or ecstasy. As I believe I have already said, some are so weak of constitution, that they are ready to die, if God but once plunges them in the prayer of quiet.

I should like to speak here of some kinds of rapture, which I have discussed with many spiritual persons, but I do not know whether I shall make the matter so clear as I have done elsewhere.\* For several reasons, there seems to be no harm in repeating what I have said before about this and other experiences, even if it were only to associate them with the mansions where they are likely to occur.

In one type of rapture, the soul, even though not in prayer, may be struck by some word of God, either remembered or heard. His Majesty, touched with pity at seeing her suffer so long with the desire of him, seems then to inflame in the interior of the soul, the spark of which we have already spoken. The soul, set wholly on fire, is renewed like a phoenix, and it seems possible to her to believe that her sins are mercifully pardoned; it must be understood, if she have the requisite dispositions, and shall have made use of the means provided by the Church. And thus purified, unknown to any but the Spouse and herself, she is united with him, nor does even the soul know how it has come to pass, so that she can afterwards speak of it, though she is not without interior certainty. She is not as one affected by a swoon or a paroxysm, who has no knowledge of anything, either interior or exterior.

From what I can understand, the soul finds herself in this state more fully awake than ever before to the things of God, nor has she ever had so much light, and knowledge of his Majesty.

It seems impossible, for if the powers are so absorbed that we may say that they are dead, and the same of the senses, how can it be that the soul has knowledge of this secret? I do not know, nor perhaps does any other creature know, but only the Creator himself, nor are many other things to be understood that take place at this stage, I mean in the last two mansions. This one and the last may almost be considered as one; there

\* *Life, chap. XX.*



is no closed door between them, but as certain things in the last mansion are not manifested except to those who have reached it, it seemed good to me to separate them.

When the soul is in this suspension, the Lord sees fit to reveal to her certain secrets concerning heavenly things, and to cause imaginary visions; these she is able afterwards to describe, and they are impressed on the memory in such a way as never to be forgotten. But when the visions are intellectual, they are impossible of description, and it must be because, during this time, some of them are of so exalted a nature, that it would not be well that those who are living on the earth should understand them so as to be able to talk about them. But when the senses have fully returned, many of these intellectual visions may be patient of description.

It is possible that some among you do not understand what is meant by a vision, especially an intellectual vision. I will speak of this in time, because my Superior has commanded me to do so, and though it may seem to be out of place, perhaps some souls will be helped by it.

Now you may ask me, if the soul has no recollection afterwards of these exalted favours bestowed upon her by the Lord, what profit does she derive from them? Oh, daughters, it is so great that it is impossible to exaggerate it, for though these favours may be indescribable, they are deeply engraven in the depths of the soul, and can never be forgotten. Then, if the powers have no image or understanding of them, how can they be remembered? I do not understand this, either, but I know that certain truths, concerning the greatness of God, remain so deeply impressed on the soul, that even had she not the faith to teach her who he is, she would be obliged to believe him to be God, and to adore him as such, as Jacob did when he saw the ladder.\* The Patriarch must, at the same time, have learned other secrets which he could not speak of, for merely seeing a ladder, and angels descending and ascending upon it, without further interior light, would not have revealed to him such great mysteries.

I do not know whether I am correct in what I am saying, for though I have heard this, I am not sure that I remember it perfectly. Neither could Moses describe all that he saw in the bush,† but only what God wished him to speak of; but if God had not revealed to his soul certain convincing secrets, so that he saw and knew that God was present to him, he would not have undertaken so many and so great works. He must have heard things so striking from among the thorns of that bramble bush, that they gave him courage to do what he did for the people of Israel.

Therefore, Sisters, we must not seek by reasoning to understand the hidden things of God, but as we believe him to be almighty, we should realise very clearly that worms of such limited power as ourselves cannot comprehend his marvels. Praise him greatly that he is pleased to reveal some of them. I am desirous of finding a simile by which to illustrate what I am saying, but I do not believe there is anything which defines it.

However, let us suppose that we are entering the apartment or salon, I believe it is called, of a king or great lord, where there is an infinite variety

\* *Gen. XXVIII, 12.*    † *Exodus III, 2.*

of glass and porcelain objects, and many things, arranged in such order that almost everything is seen on entering.

Once I was brought into a room such as this, in the house of the Duchess of Alva, where, being on a journey, obedience bid me stay, as I had been very urgently invited by this lady. I was struck with astonishment on entering, and fell to wondering what could possibly be the use of such a medley of things, and I saw that it might be to provoke praise to the Lord for so many different objects; now it is a matter of thanksgiving to me, since it has provided me with an illustration.

Though I was in the salon for some time, there was so much to see, that afterwards, I forgot everything, and this so entirely, that of not one of those objects did any more recollection remain to me than if I had never seen them, nor could I even say of what they were composed; but I remember that I saw the collection.

Thus it is with the soul in this state. Closely united with God, plunged in that empyrean heaven that we must have in the interior of our souls,—for it is clear that if God is in them, he must be in one of these mansions,—when the soul is thus in ecstasy, the Lord may not always wish her to see those secret things, and she is so inebriated with joy, in him, that this suffices her; yet, sometimes, he chooses to deprive her of this ecstatic joy, and then she immediately sees whatever is in the apartment. Thus, when, afterwards, the soul returns to herself, there remains some remembrance of what she saw, but she can describe nothing, nor can her natural powers grasp more of the supernatural than God has chosen to reveal.

Then I confess that there *was* something to see, and that it *was* an imaginary vision? I do not mean to say any such thing, and I am not referring to any but an intellectual vision, but as I have no learning, my ignorance fails to express anything clearly. If what I have said previously is of any value, it is obviously not mine.

It is my opinion, that when these hidden things are not shown to the enraptured soul, there is no true rapture, but the experience is due to natural weakness. A person of delicate constitution may be overpowered by some vehemence of the spirit, which leaves her in a state of inebriation, such as I think I described when speaking of the prayer of quiet. This state has nothing in common with true rapture, in which, believe me, God seizes the soul entirely for himself, and, as something of his own, and now his spouse, he displays to her some part of the kingdom that she has won by being his. However slight the revelation, everything is great in God, who is himself this kingdom. He does not wish for any opposition, whether from the powers or the senses, and he at once commands that the doors of all the mansions be closed, leaving open only that of the one he is in, that we may enter.

Blessed be so much mercy, and rightly are they accursed who do not wish to profit by it, and lose this Lord! Oh, my Sisters, what a naught it is that we sacrifice, and how insignificant is all that we do, however much it may be, for a God who desires to communicate himself to a worm. And if we have hope of enjoying such a good even in this life, what are we doing? what is holding us back? what is it that suffices to detain us even for the space of a Memento from seeking this Lord, as the Bride in

the Canticle sought him, in the streets and squares of the city? \*

Oh, what a delusion is everything of this world, if it do not direct and assist us in this search, even though its pleasures, riches, and every imaginable delight were to last forever. What dirt and rubbish is everything compared with those treasures that may be enjoyed for ever, nor are even these anything in comparison with the joy of having for our own the Lord of the whole treasury of heaven and earth.

Oh, human blindness! When, when will our eyes be free from this dust? For though there does not seem to be so much dust in our eyes as to blind us entirely, still I see some little motes, some grains, which, if allowed to accumulate, may be sufficient to injure us greatly.

For the love of God, Sisters, let us profit by these faults to recognise our misery, and then they may give us better sight, as the clay did to the blind man, who was cured by our Spouse.† Seeing ourselves so imperfect, let us ask him more fervently to turn our miseries to good account, so that we may please his Majesty in everything.

I have digressed a good deal without realising it. Pardon me, Sisters, and believe me, when I approach God's glories, I mean in speaking of them, I cannot help being deeply grieved to see what we forfeit by our own fault. For though it is true that God grants his favours to whom he will, if we sought his Majesty as he seeks us, he would bestow them upon us all; he desires nothing else than to find souls to whom he can give, and his riches are not diminished thereby.

Now to return to what I was describing. When the Spouse wishes to ravish a soul, he commands that the doors of the mansions be closed, and even those of the Castle and its precincts. Breath leaves the body, so that though the senses are sometimes retained for a little longer, it is quite impossible to speak. At other times, there is immediate deprivation of every sense, and the hands and the whole body become as cold as if the spirit had departed, and sometimes breathing is scarcely perceptible.

This lasts but a short while, I mean, this degree of suspension, and the body recovering somewhat, takes courage to return to this death in life, and to give greater life to the soul: with all this, so deep an ecstasy does not last long. But though this is so, the will remains so inebriated, and the mind so transported, for a day or even for some days, that the person seems incapable of understanding anything but what may inspire love in the will, which is fully awake to this, but defiantly asleep as to any attachment to creatures.

Oh, when the soul returns completely to herself, what confusion this favour causes her, and how greatly are her desires augmented of serving God in whatever way he may wish to make use of her! If the effects of the preceding modes of prayer are what have been described, what will be those of a favour so great as this? The soul longs to have a thousand lives in which to be employed wholly in God's service, and that all things whatsoever there are in the world were so many tongues to praise him on her behalf. Desires of doing penances of the utmost severity increase, and she makes little of performing them, because the force of her love is

\* *Canticle of Canticles III, 2.*

† *St. John IV, 6.*



such as to make her count for little whatever she may do. She sees clearly that the martyrs thought little of the tortures they suffered, because everything was made easy to them by this help on the part of our Lord. Such souls complain to his Majesty when no occasion of suffering presents itself. When God grants this favour in secret, they consider it a very great mercy, because when other persons are present, the confusion and shame are very great. The soul too, is distracted in some measure from what she is enjoying by the pain and anxiety occasioned by fear of what must be the thoughts of those who have seen her. The malice of the world is such that her condition may perhaps not be attributed to its true cause, and what should be an occasion of praising God may be made an opportunity of rash judgment.

To some extent it seems to me that this pain and confusion show a want of humility on the part of the person in question, for the matter is not in her hands, and if she wishes to be despised, why is she concerned? One who was thus afflicted heard our Lord say: "Be not troubled, for either they must praise Me or murmur at thee, and in either case thou wilt be the gainer."\* I learned afterwards, that this person was greatly encouraged and consoled by these words, and lest some among you were ever in this affliction, I place them for you here.

The Lord seems to wish that everyone should understand that this soul is his own, and that no-one must touch her. Let them attack her body, her honour, her possessions, well and good, for his Majesty will be glorified in all this, but her soul, no, for unless, with very culpable hardihood, she desert her Spouse, he will protect her against the whole world and even against hell itself.

I do not know whether I have given some idea of what a rapture is: to explain it fully is impossible, as I have said, but I do not think I have lost anything in describing it, so that its true nature may be understood. Feigned raptures have very different effects. I do not say 'feigned' because those who have them wish to deceive, but because they are not true raptures. As their signs and effects do not correspond with those of such exalted favours, these are themselves discredited, and when the Lord bestows them on a person, very naturally, she is not believed.

May he be for ever blessed and praised. Amen, amen.

### Chapter V

*The Saint continues the same subject, and describes a certain flight of the spirit which is due to God's action, but is a different kind of favour from that previously mentioned. The Saint speaks of the need of courage, and of the sweetness of true favours from God. The chapter is specially enlightening.*

There is another kind of rapture, which I call flight of the spirit, and

\* *The Saint herself.*



though it is essentially the same as the preceding, it is felt interiorly in a very different manner. Sometimes the soul finds herself in sudden rapid movement, and the spirit seems to be caught away with such speed, as to cause fear, especially at first. This is why I said that great courage is necessary in those to whom God shows these favours, and also faith, confidence, and a great resignation, so that the Lord may do with the soul what he wills. Do you think that the shock is slight, when a person who is in full possession of her senses, sees her soul suddenly rapt away? And I have even read that sometimes the body is transported too, without the person knowing where she is going, or who is taking her or how, and, at first, there is not so great a conviction that God is causing this impetuous movement.

Now, is there any possibility of resisting it? None; on the contrary, to resist makes matters worse. I know a certain person who tried to do so, but it seems that God wishes the soul to understand that since she has so many times and in very truth placed herself completely in his hands, and with her whole will has offered him everything, she has no longer any part in herself; for then a still more impetuous movement caught her away. She therefore decided in future to offer no more resistance than does a straw when the amber raises it, as you may have observed, but to leave herself in the hands of him who is so powerful, assured that to make a virtue of necessity is the best thing to do. Speaking of straw, it is obvious that with the same ease with which a stalwart can snatch up a straw, our great and powerful Giant can snatch away the spirit.

The basin of water of which I believe we spoke in the fourth mansions, though I do not remember for certain,\* was replenished gently and silently, I mean without any agitation. Now this great God, who controls the water-springs, and permits not the sea to pass its bounds,† lets loose the flowing waters which supply the basin, and with a great rush they form a billow of such volume that it raises on high the little vessel of our soul. And just as a ship cannot keep her couree, nor is any pilot strong enough, nor the sailors who man her, to obtain it, when the waves are lashing her in fury, and driving her where they will, much less is it possible to control the interior of the soul, or to compel the senses and powers to do what they are bidden. As for the exterior, it can assist in no way.

Certainly, Sisters, if only to write of this favour fills me with astonishment on seeing this striking evidence of the power of our great King and Emperor, what must it be to experience it? It is my opinion that if his Majesty would show himself to those who are going to perdition in the world, as he does to these souls, if not out of love, out of fear they would not dare to offend him. Then, what an obligation rests upon those who have been warned in such an exalted manner to endeavour with all their might not to anger this Lord.

I implore you, Sisters, if his Majesty has granted you this or similar favours, for his sake not to be careless, as if you had nothing to do but to receive. Remember that he who owes much has much to pay.‡ Here

\* *Fourth Mansions, II.*    † *Prov. VIII, 19.*    ‡ *St. Luke XII, 48.*

also courage is necessary, and unless the Lord grant it, the soul will always be in deep affliction, for, considering what his Majesty does for her, and then looking into herself, she is apt to be greatly cast down, for the service that she renders seems to be so little in comparison with her debt.

Besides, even this little is so full of faults, imperfections and weakness, that it seems better not to remember how imperfectly work has been performed, but to try to forget it, and keeping her sins in mind, to plunge into God's mercy. Since she has nothing with which to pay, she may implore the compassion and mercy which he always showed towards sinners. Perhaps he will reply as he did to one, who being in great affliction on this account was kneeling before a crucifix, and thinking that she had never had anything to give to God, nor anything to sacrifice for him, the Crucified himself spoke to her consolingly. He told her that he gave her all the sorrows and pains that he had endured in his Passion, and that they were hers to offer to his Father. According to what I have understood from her, that soul was so consoled and enriched by these words, that she could never forget them; on the contrary, whenever she surveys her misery afresh, she remembers them and is encouraged and comforted.\*

I could give several instances of the same kind. Treating so much as I do with holy people given to prayer, I know many, but lest you should think that I am speaking of myself, I will not say more. This example seems to me to be very instructive, because it shows that our Lord is pleased when we realise what we are, and think over and over again upon our poverty and misery, and that we have nothing but what we have received.† Therefore, my Sisters, on account of this and of many other considerations, which present themselves to a soul, to whom our Lord has shown such favours, courage is necessary, and to my thinking, for this last more than for any, if there be humility. May the Lord, for his own sake, grant it to us.

Now to return to that sudden rapture, which is of such a kind that the spirit seems really to go forth from the body, and yet on the other hand, it is clear that the person is not dead, though for some instants, she cannot tell whether she is in the body or not.‡ It seems to her that she has been, body and soul, in a very different region from that in which we live, where a light shines quite other than the light of this world, and many other things are seen, which if she spent all her life in trying to depict them, it would be impossible to do so. At the same time, she learns so many things at once, that in many years of labour, with her imagination and thought, she could not sort them out, nor even one thousandth part of them. This is not an intellectual, but an imaginative vision, and it is seen with the eyes of the soul much more clearly than here we see with the eyes of the body; some things are also explained without words. For instance, if Saints are seen, they are known as well as if much conversation had been held with them.

At other times, along with these things which are seen with the eyes of the soul, others are represented by an intellectual vision, such as a

\* *The Saint herself.*    † *I Cor. IV, 7.*    ‡ *II Cor. XII, 2.*

multitude of angels, with our Lord in their midst. Without anything being seen with the eyes of the body or of the soul, by an admirable cognisance which I do not know how to describe, these and many other things are shown to her that cannot be enumerated. Those who may have had these experiences, and have more ability than I, will perhaps be able to set them forth, though it seems to me to be very difficult. I am unable to say whether a person in this state is in the body or not; at least, I would neither swear that she is in the body, nor that the body is deprived of the soul.

I have often thought, that if the sun being in the heavens, and without moving from where he is, can send forth beams so strong that they reach the earth at once, may not the soul and the spirit, which are but one thing, as are the sun and his rays, though remaining in their place, send forth on high, by the strength of the heat derived from the veritable Sun of Justice, some superior part of themselves?

I do not in fact know what I am saying, but what is true is that with the velocity with which a bullet leaves a gun when it is fired, a flight takes place in the interior, and I do not know how to call it anything else. Though there is no noise, the movement is so plainly distinguishable, that there can be no question of delusion. When she is completely outside herself, so far as can be ascertained, great things are shown to the soul. When she returns to full consciousness, it is with such great benefits, and so little she cares for any earthly thing, that everything appears as so much refuse, in comparison with what she has seen. From this time onwards, she lives on earth in grievous pain, for she sees that nothing that was wont to give her pleasure can now afford her any. It appears that the Lord has wished to show her something of the land to which she is going,—just as those whom the people of Israel sent into the land of promise, brought back tokens of its charms\*—so that she may endure the trials of this difficult journey, knowing where she has to go to find repose.

Though an experience of such short duration may not seem to you likely to be very profitable to the soul, it is so to a degree only appreciated by one who has known it. This makes it obvious that it did not proceed from the devil, and to imagine it would be impossible, nor could the devil represent anything that would confer so much peace, tranquillity and enrichment of the soul, especially three things of most exalted worth: knowledge of the greatness of God, for the more she sees, the more she divines is in store; secondly, knowledge of self and humility, from seeing how a thing so low in comparison with the Creator of such grandeurs, has dared to offend him, and dares still to gaze at him; thirdly, a great contempt for earthly things, except for those which can be turned to the service of so great a God.

These are the jewels which the Spouse begins to give to his bride, and they are of such price that she will not place them in jeopardy. These wedding gifts remain so deeply graven in the memory, that I believe it is impossible to forget them until they are to be enjoyed for ever, unless forfeited by her own most grievous fault. But the bridegroom who

\* *Num. XIII, 14.*



bestows them upon her has power to give her the grace not to lose them.

Now, once more referring to the courage that is needed, does it seem to you such a slight thing? For verily, the soul seems to be separated from the body, because she finds herself losing consciousness, and she does not know why. It is necessary that he should give courage who gives all the rest. You will say that her fear is well rewarded; so I say also. May he be for ever praised, who is able to give so much. May his Majesty be pleased to give us what we need to be worthy to serve him. Amen.

### Chapter VI

*The Saint speaks of an effect of the prayer described in the preceding chapter, by which it may be known to be true, and not an illusion; she also speaks of another favour by which the Lord inspires the soul to praise him.*

These favours, exalted as they are, leave the soul so desirous of enjoying to the full the presence of him who has bestowed them upon her, that she lives in a perpetual, though sweet torment; with inexpressible longings to die, she implores God, often with tears, to remove her from this exile. Everything that she sees around her wearies her; to find herself alone is a great relief; but her pain assails her anew, and when she is without it, she is no better off.

In fact, this little butterfly does not succeed in finding an enduring place of rest; on the contrary, as the soul is filled with love, the least occasion which serves to increase the fire within her, makes her take flight; thus, in these mansions, raptures are frequent, and she cannot prevent them, even in public. Persecutions and murmuring follow, and though she would fain be without fears, many people, and especially the confessors, cause her to tremble. And though in the interior of the soul there is a sense of security on the one hand, especially when she is alone with God, on the other, she is deeply afflicted, because she fears that by some deception of the devil, she may offend him whom she loves so dearly. She cares little for murmuring against her, except when the confessor himself upbraids her, as if she could prevent these raptures.

She asks everyone to pray for her, and begs his Majesty to lead her by some other way, as she is told to do, because of the danger she is in. But as she has found great profit in her present state, and she cannot fail to see that it is leading her, as she reads and hears and knows, by the commandments of God, along the road to heaven, she cannot, however much she may wish, desire anything else but to leave herself in his hands.

Even this inability to desire another way, gives her pain, for it seems to her that she is not obeying the confessor, and in obeying and not offending our Lord seem to lie her only safe-guards against deception; since she would not commit even a venial sin wilfully, though she might be cut to pieces, or so it seems to her, yet she is deeply grieved to see that she may commit many inadvertently. God gives to these souls so great a desire not to displease him in the least thing, however, small, nor even to be guilty of an imperfection if they can help it, that for this alone, even



if not for any other reason, they wish to flee from society.

They feel great envy of those who live and have lived in desert places; on the other hand, they would wish to plunge into the midst of the world, if they could thereby in any way induce some soul to praise God more. If a woman is in question, she is afflicted, because of the hindrance that her nature is to her, since she cannot act thus, and she is very envious of those who are free to speak aloud, and to publish the glory of this great Lord of Hosts.

Ah, poor little butterfly, fastened by so many chains, that permit thee not to fly as thou wilt! Have pity, my God, ordain that in some way she may be able to realise her desires for thy honour and glory! Remember not her small deserts, and her native incapacity. Thou art powerful, Lord, and didst make the sea and the great Jordan to fall back and allow the children of Israel to pass over;\* spare her not, for with thine assistance, she will be able to undertake great toils. She is resolved to do so, and she desires to suffer them.

Stretch forth, Lord, thy powerful arm, and let not her life be spent in futile works. Make thy greatness apparent in this lowly woman, so that the world, understanding that it is none of hers, may praise thee, let the cost to her be what it may; for this she longs, and to give a thousand lives if she had them, that on her account one soul may praise thee somewhat more. She would consider them very well employed, but she realises, that in very truth, she does not deserve to suffer for thee even the very least trial, how much less to die for thee! I do not know *apropos* of what I have said this, Sisters, nor for what reason, but I have not been aware of what I was writing.

What we have to understand is that without any doubt whatever these are the effects of those suspensions or ecstasies; and these desires do not pass away, but they are stable, and when opportunity offers, the soul shows plainly that they are not feigned. But what is it that I say is stable? Sometimes, the soul feels cowardly, and about things of no account; frightened, and with so little courage that it does not seem possible to undertake anything. I think the Lord leaves her then in her natural weakness, for her own good. With a clarity that leaves her annihilated, she sees that if she has possessed any courage, it was given to her by his Majesty, and she gains a greater knowledge of God and his greatness, since in a creature so low, he has willed to show it forth; usually, however, the soul is in the state I have described.

I warn you of one thing, Sisters, concerning these great desires of seeing our Lord; they can be sometimes so oppressive, that it is necessary not to encourage them, but to divert yourselves, I mean if you can, because at other times, as I will show further on, it is in no way possible, as you will see. At this stage, at least, it is possible to restrain them sometimes, because your reason is free to bring you into conformity with the will of God, and to say what Saint Martin said;† also, you can change the current

\* *Exod. XIV.*

† *Before his death, Saint Martin is reported to have prayed: "Lord, if I am still necessary to thy people, I do not shrink from toil. Thy will be done."*

of your thoughts, if they distress you.

Such desires seem to be those of persons very advanced in spirituality, and the devil may inspire them, to tempt us to think that we are so; therefore, it is well always to walk in fear. But I am of the opinion, that the devil cannot impart the quietude and peace, which this pain gives to the soul. Rather he would excite some passion, such as we experience when anxious concerning worldly matters. The soul that has no experience of either the one or the other, will not understand this, and believing the pain to be a great grace, will encourage it as much as possible, and this will greatly injure the health, because this pain is, or it usually is, continuous.

Also notice that a weak constitution is apt to be the cause of these pains, especially in tender-hearted persons, who weep over every little thing; the devil will make them believe a thousand times that they are weeping for God, but it may not be so at all. It may even happen, when there are floods of tears, I mean, that flow unrestrainedly at any little word that they hear, or the slightest thought concerning God, that some little humour round about the heart, rather than the love of God is the cause of the uncontrollable weeping.

Since such tears are supposed to be good, these persons let themselves go, and do not wish to stop crying, but rather they encourage their tears as much as possible. The devil then suggests that they are too much weakened to be able either to pray or to keep the Rule.

I seem to hear you enquiring what you have to do, since I see danger in everything, and if deception is possible in so good a thing as tears, perhaps I am myself deceived. It may be so, but believe me, I do not speak without having-seen what can happen in some people, though not in myself, because I am not at all tender, but on the contrary, my heart is so hard, that it is sometimes a grief to me. Yet when the fire within is ablaze, hard though my heart may be, it distils like an alembic.

You should readily distinguish when tears arise from such a source, for then they are rather comforting and soothing than disturbing, and they seldom do harm. One good thing about this delusion, when it is one, is that it harms the body, but if there be humility, not the soul. If however, humility be lacking, it will not be a bad thing to be suspicious.

Do not imagine that everything is done by much weeping; let us rather set to work to acquire virtue, for this is the all-important thing, and let tears come when God sends them, and not by our endeavours to compel them. Those tears will leave the dry earth watered, and they are a great help in rendering it fruitful; the less we have to do in producing them the better, for that water which we draw, exhausting ourselves in digging for it, cannot be compared with the water which falls from heaven.\* We shall very often dig, and find ourselves worn out, without obtaining even a puddle, much less a gushing spring.

This is why I think it is better, Sisters, to put ourselves in our Lord's presence, and to consider his mercy and greatness and our vileness, leaving it to him to give us what he wills, whether it be water or drought.

\* *Way of Perfection. Chap. XXI, p. 95 (Ed. 1941).*

He knows best what is good for us, and thus we shall remain tranquil, and the devil will not have so good an opportunity of playing tricks on us. In the midst of these mingled pains and savours, our Lord sometimes grants to the soul a certain jubilation, and a strange kind of prayer, which I do not know how to describe. I mention it here, in case he may grant you this favour, for you should thank him greatly for it, and know that it is a thing which may arrive. It seems to me to be a close union with God of the powers, which however, are allowed liberty by our Lord to enjoy this grace, and the senses likewise, without understanding what it is they enjoy, or how they enjoy it.

This seems to be jargon, but it certainly happens, and it causes such excessive joy to the soul, that she does not wish to rejoice in it alone, but to speak of it to everyone, that they may help her to praise our Lord, for this is her sole desire. Oh, what festivals, and demonstrations she would make, if she could, so that everyone should realise her joy. She seems to have found herself again, and like the father of the prodigal son,\* she wants to invite everyone, and to make a great feast. She sees that her soul, without doubt, is in a state of security, at least for the moment, and I think she is right. The devil cannot possibly impart so great an interior joy, in the intimate depths of the soul, with so much peace, while she finds her whole pleasure in singing the praises of God. She can scarcely keep silence and dissimulate the strong impulse of joy, and it is not a little painful to do so.

Saint Francis must have felt thus when the robbers came across him as he passed through the fields, crying out in a loud voice that he was the herald of the great King. Other Saints betook themselves to the deserts, so that they might be able, like Saint Francis, to pour forth freely the praises of their God. I knew one called Fray Pedro of Alcantara, whose life made me regard him as a Saint; he acted in the same way, and was looked upon as a fool by those who heard him. Oh, what excellent foolery, Sisters, would that God would inspire us all with such! What a favour he has done you in bringing you where, if the Lord should grant this grace, and you give evidence of it, you will find encouragement and not blame, as you would do in the world, for this voice of praise is heard so seldom, that it is not surprising if it be criticised.

Oh, unhappy times and miserable life in which we now live! Blessed are they to whom so happy a lot has fallen that they are out of it! Sometimes, when we are together, I see with special joy certain Sisters, whose interior jubilation moves them with all their might to praise the Lord for having brought them into the monastery, and I see that these praises rise from the depths of their souls. I hope that you will often act thus, Sisters, for when one begins, she inspires the rest. In what better manner can you employ your tongues when we are together, than in praising God, since we have so much reason for doing so? May it please his Majesty frequently to give us this prayer, seeing that it is so safe and so gainful!

We cannot acquire it, because it is supernatural. When it lasts the whole day, the soul is like one who has drunk too much, but not so much

\* *St. Luke XV, 23.*



that she is out of her senses; or she is like a melancholy person, who has not quite lost her judgment, but is obsessed with an idea in her imagination, of which no one can disabuse her. Very rude comparisons these to illustrate so precious a state, but my talent affords me no others.

It really is thus, for this joy places the soul in such forgetfulness of self and all things, that she does not regard nor succeed in speaking of anything except what proceeds from her joy: the praise of God. Let us help this soul, my daughters all! why should we wish to have more brains than she? what can content us better? Let all creatures come to our aid, to praise our God for ever and ever. Amen, amen, amen.

### Chapter VII

*The Saint speaks of the pain which the sense of their sins gives to the souls favoured by God in the manner described. She says how great an error it is not to exercise ourselves, however spiritual we may be, in recalling the Humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his most sacred Passion and life, as also his glorious Mother and the Saints. This doctrine is very helpful.*

You may imagine, Sisters, that those souls with whom the Lord communicates so intimately, feel so secure that they are to enjoy him for ever, that they no longer need to fear and to weep for their sins. Those especially who have not received such favours, may think thus, but if they have, they will confirm what I am going to say.

Such an idea is utterly mistaken, because sorrow for sin only increases with the increase of God's gifts, and I believe, myself, that until we are where sorrow is no more, this pain will not leave us. It is true that it oppresses us more sometimes than at other times, and also it varies in kind. More than formerly, the soul dwells, not on the punishment due to her sins, but on her base ingratitude towards one to whom she owes so much, and who so well merits to be served. The great things revealed to this soul increase her knowledge of God's glory, and she marvels at her own audacity. She deplores her scant reverence; her folly appears to her now such madness, that she never ceases to regret having left, for things so vile, a Majesty so excellent. She dwells more upon these things than upon the favours she has received, great as these are, and those also that I am about to describe. These graces seem to be borne into the soul as by a river in flood, which brings them at its tides. But her sins appear to her as a cesspool, which constantly reminds her of its presence, and this is an extremely heavy cross.

I know a person who, having ceased to wish to die in order to see God, craved for death so that she might no longer be in pain at seeing how ungrateful she had been to One to whom she owed, and must always owe, so much. It seemed to her that no-one had committed so many enormities as she; for she realised that there was no-one from whom God had had so much to suffer, nor to whom he had granted so many favours. Regard-



ing any fear of hell, such souls have none, though occasionally, they are oppressed by a fear of losing God. Their chief dread is that God may let them fall from his hand, and then they may offend him, and see themselves again in their former miserable condition. They have no thought either of their own suffering or glory; and if they do not wish to be long in Purgatory, it is rather the desire of not being absent from God that moves them, than any fear of the pains they may have to endure.

However greatly favoured by God, I do not consider that soul to be safe, who forgets the miserable state in which she was once plunged, because though this recollection is painful, it is very profitable. Perhaps my having been so wicked, makes this seem necessary to me, and is the cause of my always bearing it in mind. Those who have been good will not feel this so much though there are always failings, while we live in this mortal body.

It is no alleviation to this torment to think that our Lord has already forgiven and forgotten our faults; on the contrary, it adds to the pain to see so much goodness, and that favours are shown towards one who has deserved nothing less than hell. I think this was a real martyrdom to Saint Peter and the Magdalene; their love had increased so much, and they had received so many favours, also they realised the greatness and Majesty of God, and therefore their sorrow for the past must have been unmitigated, and accompanied by the most profound and tender sentiments.

You may also imagine that a soul who has reached such exalted heights will no longer meditate on the mysteries of the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, because she exercises herself entirely in loving. This is a thing about which I have written at length elsewhere,\* and though I have been contradicted, and told that I do not understand the matter, because the Lord leads souls by this way, and when they are beyond the state of beginners, it is better to meditate on the Divinity and to flee from corporal images, no-one will persuade me that this is a good way.

It may be that I am mistaken, and that we all mean the same thing, but for myself, I saw that the devil wished by this means to mislead me. Experience has taught me this, as I think, and though I have mentioned it many times before, I will repeat it here, that you may be very cautious in this matter. Mark that I even dare to warn you not to believe anyone who tells you otherwise. I will try to make my meaning plainer than I have done before. Perhaps, if a certain person has written more fully, as he said he would, he may have made it clear; but to speak briefly, as he did to those of us who are not well acquainted with the subject, might have done much harm.

Some people imagine that they cannot think about the Passion, and still less can they meditate on the most holy Virgin, and on the lives of the Saints, which are so profitable, and whose remembrance gives us fresh courage. I cannot imagine what they think about; it is for angelic spirits, entirely separated from corporeal things, to be always on fire with love, and not for those who, like ourselves, are living in mortal flesh.

\* *Life, chaps. XXII and XXVI.*

It is necessary to speak with, to think about, and to be accompanied by those who while still in the body, did such heroic deeds in God's service. How much less should we neglect the consideration of the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is our whole good and remedy. I cannot believe that anyone does so, but some do not understand themselves, and thus they do harm both to themselves and others. If they are so mistaken, I assure them that they will not enter these two last Mansions, for if they lose the Guide, who is the gentle Jesus, they will not find the way; it will be much if they remain safely in the others. The Lord himself says that he is the Way; he also calls himself the Light, and adds that no man can go to the Father but by him, and "he who sees me sees my Father also."\*

Such persons say that these words have another sense; I do not know any other sense; with this sense, which my soul recognises to be the true one, I have always been well satisfied.

There are some people, and some of them have conversed with me, who, once raised to perfect contemplation by our Lord, wish to remain always thus, and it cannot be. After receiving this favour from the Lord, however, they can no longer meditate, as before, on the mysteries of the sacred Passion and the life of Christ. I do not know what is the cause of this, but it is very usual, and the understanding becomes less able for meditation. I think the reason may be that meditation is entirely a seeking after God, and the soul, once having found him, and growing accustomed to find him by an effort of the will, experiences in the understanding a disinclination to fatigue itself by beginning the search over again.

Also, it seems to me that the will, being already inflamed with love, this generous power does not wish to take advantage of another if she can help it; and this is not wrong, but it will be impossible (for the will to be thus independent), at least until the last Mansions are reached. Time will be lost, because very often it will be necessary to have recourse to the understanding to enkindle the will. Note this point, daughters, for it is important, and therefore, I wish to explain it further.

What the soul desires is to be occupied solely in loving, and not to do anything else, but even though it would, it cannot; for if the will be not dead, the fire with which it is wont to be inflamed is dying down, and it needs to be fanned to make it give out heat again. Now would it be good for a soul to remain in this aridity, waiting for fire to descend from heaven to burn this sacrifice, which she is making of herself to God, as did our Father Elias?† No, certainly not, neither is it good to expect miracles. The Lord will work them for this soul, when he is pleased to do so, as has been said, and as I will repeat later, but his Majesty wishes that we shall consider ourselves too miserable to deserve that he should work them, and that we should help ourselves as much as we possibly can.

For myself, I believe that until we die, however exalted our prayer may be, this will be necessary. It is true that those whom the Lord introduces into the seventh Mansions, seldom or almost never need to stimulate their fervour thus, for the reason which I will give when we are there, if

\* *St. John VIII, 12, and XIV, 6-9.*

† *III Kings XVIII, 30-39.*

I remember. In those mansions, the soul lives continuously with Christ our Lord, in an admirable manner, by which, in his Divinity and Humanity united, he is always her companion.

Thus, when the fire we have spoken of is not kindled in the will, and neither are we conscious of the presence of God, it is necessary to seek him, for his Majesty wishes it, as did the Spouse in the Canticle.\* Let us ask created things who made them, as Saint Augustine tells us that he did, I think in his Meditations or Confessions,† and let us not be simpletons, losing time in waiting for that which has once been given to us, for in the beginning, it may be a year or even many years, before the Lord will visit us again. His Majesty alone knows why, we ourselves ought not to wish to know, nor is there occasion for it. We know that the way to please him is to be very attentive to his commandments and counsels, and to think upon his life and death, and how much we owe him; let the rest come when the Lord wills.

Now I meet with the objection from some that they cannot dwell upon these things, and by reason of what I have said previously, perhaps they are right to some extent. By this time you have learnt that to discourse with the understanding is one thing, and for the memory to represent certain truths to the mind is another. You may say perhaps, that you do not understand me, and indeed it may be that I do not know how to explain it in a manner to be well understood, but I will speak of it according to my knowledge.

I call a lengthy discourse by the understanding, meditation. Thus, let us begin by thinking about the favour God has shown us in giving us his only Son, and, not stopping there, let us go on to the mysteries of his whole glorious life. Or we may begin by the prayer in the Garden, and not check the work of the understanding, until the Saviour is nailed to the Cross. Or let us take an incident of the Passion, such as the arrest of Jesus, and then proceed to study this mystery in detail, considering the things to be thought of and felt, such as the treachery of Judas, the flight of the Apostles, and all the rest. This is an admirable and very meritorious prayer. At the same time, it is the prayer I am thinking of, when I say that those souls who have reached the state when God raises them to supernatural things, and to perfect contemplation, are right in saying that they cannot practice, though as I have said, I do not know why.

It is not, however, correct to say that they do not ponder these mysteries, and very often recall them to mind, especially when the Catholic Church is commemorating them. Souls that have received so much from God cannot possibly lose the remembrance of such precious tokens of his love, because they are living sparks which inflame their love for our Lord; but the matter is not understood. Such souls are really considering the mysteries in a more perfect manner (than in the former meditations), for when the mind depicts them, they are so impressed on the memory, that a single glance at the Lord prostrate in the Garden; bathed in that fearful sweat, is sufficient to occupy them not only for one hour, but for many days. Simply gazing upon him, they consider who he is, and how

\* *Cant. III, 31.* † *Confessions. Book X, ch. 6.*



indifferent they have been to his great sorrow. Then the will responds, though it may not be with tenderness, with a desire to serve in some way this merciful Lord, and to suffer something for One who has suffered so much, with other similar considerations which occupy the memory and the intelligence.

I believe this is the reason why it is impossible to discourse more concerning the Passion, and which makes it seem impossible to think about it. But if this be not done, it is well to try to do it, for I do not know how the most exalted prayer can impede it, nor can I believe that it is good not to practice it very often. If during such prayer, the Lord should suspend the faculties, well and good, for then, despite themselves, they must abandon this prayer. I am quite convinced that this manner of proceeding is a great assistance to the soul, and not an obstacle to good, such as it would be if she worked too much with the mind, as I said at the beginning, and for myself I hold it to be impossible for anyone who has reached a more exalted prayer to do so.

At the same time, there may be some who are able to do it, for God leads souls by many ways, but they must not be condemned who are unable to make prolonged meditations, nor are they to be judged as disabled for the enjoyment of the great benefits contained in the mysteries of our dear Jesus Christ. No-one, however spiritual he may be, will make me think such a condemnation wise.

There are certain souls, beginning or even semi-advanced, who, when they commence to experience the prayer of quiet, and to taste those savours and gusts which the Lord gives, think that it is a very great thing to remain thus in constant enjoyment, but, believe me they should not be too much absorbed, as I have already said elsewhere, for life is long and full of trials, and we need to consider how our Model, Jesus Christ bore them, and even his Apostles and Saints, so that we too may bear them perfectly. Our dear Jesus is a very good Companion, from whom and from whose holy Mother we should never be separated. He is greatly consoled when we sympathise with him in his sorrows, and sometimes give up our own satisfaction and delight.

Besides, daughters, consolations in prayer are not so usual that we have not time for everything, and if some-one were to tell me that she is always in consolation, I should regard her state with suspicion, I mean, if she could never do what I suggest. And thus let her regard it, and strive to shake off this delusion, and distract herself by main force. If she cannot do so, she should tell the Prioress, so that she may give her an office needing so much attention that it will rid her of this danger, which is very serious, at least for the brain and head, if it last long.

I think I have made it clear that however spiritual we may be, it is wise not to banish corporeal images to such a degree that we come to regard even the most sacred Humanity as a source of danger. Some quote the words of our Lord to his disciples, when he said that it was expedient for them that he should go away.\* I cannot admit this. Certainly the Lord did not say it to his blessed Mother, for her faith was firm, and

\* *St. John XVI, 7.*



she knew that he was God and man, and though she loved him more than they, it was with such perfection, that it rather helped than hindered her.

The Apostles could not then have been so firm in their faith as they were afterwards, and as we should be now. I repeat to you, daughters, that I consider it to be a dangerous way, by which the devil could bring about a loss of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. This delusion did not, in my case, extend so far as that, it seems to me, but only to a distaste for thinking so much about our Lord Jesus Christ, while I remained in anxiety, awaiting a renewal of the favour I had received. I saw clearly that I was going astray, for since I could not expect to have it always, my thoughts wandered hither and thither, and my soul seemed to me to be like a bird wheeling round, and unable to find a place of rest. I was losing time, and not improving in virtue, nor making progress in prayer.

I did not realise the cause of this, nor should I have understood it, it seems to me, for my method of prayer appeared to me to be very good, but speaking of it to a person who was a servant of God, she warned me. Then I saw clearly how mistaken I was, and I have never ceased to regret that there was a time when I failed to understand that nothing good could be gained by so great a loss. And even if it were possible, I do not wish for any good but that which is derived from him who is the Author of all our good. May he be for ever praised. Amen.

### Chapter VIII

*The Saint speaks of the manner in which God communicates himself to the soul by an intellectual vision, and she gives some advice. She speaks of the effects of such a vision, when it is genuine, and recommends secrecy concerning these favours.*

So that you may see more clearly, Sisters, that what I have told you is true, and that the greater the progress of a soul, the more closely is she accompanied by this good Jesus, it will be well for us to consider how, when his Majesty wills it, we cannot but be always with him. This is proved by the various ways in which his Majesty communicates himself to us, and displays the love he has for us by certain admirable apparitions and visions.

If he should choose to grant some one of these favours to any of you, do not be astonished. I wish, if the Lord be pleased that I succeed, to say something concerning them, so that we may greatly praise him, even though we ourselves are not the recipients of the favour he wills, in spite of his great Majesty and power, thus to extend to a creature.

It may happen that a soul, far from thinking of receiving such a grace, and never having considered herself worthy of it, may be suddenly conscious that Jesus Christ our Lord is beside her, though she does not see him, either with the eyes of the body or of the soul. This is called an intellectual vision, though I do not know why. I have seen this person

to whom God showed such a favour, and many others that I will speak of later, much exercised at the beginning, because she could not understand what kind of a vision it was, since she could not see anything.

She was quite certain that he was Jesus Christ our Lord who was showing himself to her in this fashion, and she could not doubt it, I mean, that she could not doubt the reality of the vision. She feared, not knowing whether it was from God or not, though it was accompanied by good effects, which should have re-assured her. But she had never heard of an intellectual vision, nor thought that there could be such a thing, yet she was persuaded that it was the same Lord who had often spoken to her in the manner I have described. Though she had heard words, she had not, however, known who spoke them until she received this favour.

Being frightened by this vision, (which, unlike an imaginary vision that is quickly over, lasted for many days, and once even for more than a year), in great distress, she had recourse to her confessor. He asked her how, if she saw nothing, she knew that it was our Lord, and enquired what he looked like. She said that she did not know; she had neither seen his face, nor could she say more than she had said; but what she was certain of was, that it was he who had spoken to her, and that this was no delusion. Her fears continued, but she seldom doubted, especially when he said to her: "Fear not, it is I." These words had such power that she could not doubt thenceforward, and she was greatly encouraged and cheered by such good company.

She saw plainly that it greatly helped her to be constantly mindful of God's presence, and not to do anything to displease him, for she felt that he was always regarding her. Whenever she wished to converse with his Majesty in prayer, and even outside prayer, he seemed to be so near to her, that he could not fail to hear her, though she could not understand the words he spoke to her when she wished, but only unexpectedly, when it was necessary. She was conscious that he kept on her right side, but she did not know this by means of those senses that tell us when a person is beside us, but by some other more subtle means that cannot possibly be described. Yet the impression is as vivid, and carries as much conviction, and even more, for the senses may mis-lead us sometimes. But we cannot be deceived by this experience, for it confers great benefits, and interior effects, that could not be if it were due to melancholy; neither could the devil do so much good, nor the soul be in so much peace with such a constant desire of pleasing God, and contempt for all that does not tend to him.

Later on, it was quite clearly seen not to come from the devil, because the Lord continued to impart more and more understanding of it. Notwithstanding this, the person\* was, I know, much frightened at times, and at others in the greatest confusion, for she knew not whence had come to her so great a good. She and I were so united, that nothing passed in her soul of which I was ignorant, and so I can bear reliable testimony, and you can believe to be true all that I have to say on this subject. It is a favour from God which produces the greatest sense of confusion and humility. If it were from the demon, everything would be quite the reverse,

\* *The Saint herself.*

and as it is a thing obviously seen to be given by God, which no human industry would suffice to procure, in no way can it be regarded by anyone who receives it, as her own, but as something given by the hand of God.

In my opinion, though some favours that I have described are more elevated, this imparts a special knowledge of God to the soul, and from this constant companionship are born a most tender love towards his Majesty, and certain desires, even greater than those already mentioned, of devoting the entire self to his service; also a great purity of conscience, since the presence beside her makes her always vigilant. Though we know that God is aware of everything we do, our nature is such that we neglect to think of it, but we cannot be so thoughtless when the Lord, who is beside us, keeps us attentive.

Moreover, as the soul is almost continuously giving a very real love to One whom she sees or understands to be near her, she receives much more frequently, also, the other favours of which we have spoken. In fact, the profit which the soul derives from this favour marks it as one of the greatest, and much to be prized, and she thanks the Lord who has extended it to her so undeservedly, since she is unable to merit it, nor would she barter it for any treasure or enjoyment in the world. Therefore, when the Lord deprives her of it, she experiences profound loneliness, and though she may employ the utmost diligence, it profits her little, for she cannot recover that holy company, and until the Lord wills to accord it, it is impossible to enjoy it. Sometimes the companionship of a Saint is granted, and this also is very helpful. You may ask, if the soul does not see anything, how she can know when it is Christ or when a Saint or his most glorious Mother? This is impossible to explain, nor does the soul understand how she knows it, but she does actually know it with the greatest certainty.

When it is the Lord, and he speaks, it is more understandable, but that a Saint who does not speak, and appears to be placed before the soul by the Lord, for her help and companionship, should be known, this is more surprising. There are also other spiritual favours which are indescribable, but by them we may comprehend the inadequacy of our nature to grasp the infinite grandeurs of God, since we are incapable of understanding even these; and let her to whom his Majesty grants them, render him all admiration and praise. She should also make special acts of thanksgiving, for since these favours are not granted to all, they are to be esteemed, and she should try to excel in God's service, who helps her in so many ways to do so. Hence it comes about, that she does not think more of herself on their account, for it seems to her that she serves God less than anyone on earth, while seeing herself deeper in his debt than others are. Also, the least fault that she commits pierces her heart, and with very good reason.

These effects in the soul should enlighten any of you whom the Lord may lead by this way, so that you may know that it is not a deceit or a delusion, because, as I have said, this state would not last if it were from the demon, nor would it be so profitable to the soul, nor produce so much peace in the interior. It is not customary for a creature so evil to do so much good, nor could he even if he would. Also, if such favours came



from him, there would be afterwards some vapours of self-esteem, and thinking ourselves to be better than others. Besides, to see a soul always uniting herself so closely with God, and employed in thinking of him would put him into such a fury, that if he attempted this deceit, he would not be likely to repeat it. Also, God is faithful and he will not permit him to have so much power over a soul whose only aspiration is to please his Majesty, and to give her life for his honour and glory, but he will soon see to it that she is undeceived. My point is and will be, that when the soul conducts herself in the manner here set forth, after receiving these favours from God, even if he sometimes permit the evil one to assail her, his Majesty will turn it to her advantage, and the demon will be put to confusion.

This is why, daughters, if anyone of you find herself in these circumstances, as I have said before, you need not be afraid. It is well to fear and to be more wary, not self-confident, for being favoured, you might become careless; but it would be a sign that the favours were not from God, if you did not find in yourselves the effects that have been described. In the beginning it is wise to communicate your experience, under the seal of confession, to an experienced priest, for learned men ought to give us light, or you might have recourse to a very spiritual woman. If you cannot find such a woman, a learned man is better; if possible, a person both learned and spiritual. If you are told that you are in delusion, do not be troubled, for delusion can do little harm if little good to your soul. Commend yourself to the divine Majesty, and beg him not to allow you to be deceived. If you are told that the devil is deluding you, that will be more distressing, but a really learned priest will not tell you this, if the effects of your prayer are what I have told you they should be.

But if such things are said to you, I know that the Lord himself, who is with you, will console and re-assure you, and he will go on giving the confessor light that he may enlighten you. If you consult someone, who, though a person of prayer, has not been led by the Lord in this way, he will be scandalised, and will condemn you, and therefore, I advise you to consult some-one really learned, and if you can find such an one, also spiritual. The Prioress will give permission for this, for though you may be seen by your good life to be in a safe way, the Prioress is obliged to let you consult someone, so that both you and she may be satisfied.

Having laid the matter before these persons, be in peace, and do not go about sharing your secret with others, for sometimes, when there is no cause to be afraid, the devil will inspire such excessive fears, that compel the soul not to be content with having spoken to a confessor, especially if he be inexperienced, or she sees that he is faint-hearted, or that he himself goes about asking advice. Thus, what must necessarily be kept very secret, may be published abroad, and the Sister persecuted and tormented. For she thinks that the secret has been kept, and she sees that it has been made public, and thence arise many unpleasant results for her, and possibly for the Order, the times being what they are.

Great circumspection is necessary in such a case, and I recommend it especially to the Prioresses. It must not be thought that a Sister who has these experiences is better than the others. The Lord gives to each



one according to her need. Such favours prepare the soul to become a great servant of God if she be helped, but sometimes, God leads by this way the weaker souls, and therefore there is nothing in them either to approve or to blame, but it should be noticed whether the Sister practices the virtues, for she who serves the Lord with the most mortification, humility, and purity of conscience is the one who is most holy, though here below, it is scarcely possible to know with certainty, until the true Judge gives to each according to her deserts. Then we shall be astonished to see how different is his judgment from that which is possible to us here on earth. May he be forever praised. Amen.

### Chapter IX

*Treats of the manner in which God communicates himself to the soul by means of an imaginary vision, and seriously warns us against desiring to be led by this way; the Saint gives her own reasons for this. The chapter is very useful.*

Now we come to the subject of imaginary visions, in which it is said that the devil can meddle more than in those just described. It may be so, but when they are from our Lord, in some ways, it seems to me that they are more helpful, because they are more suitable to our nature, saving only those which the Lord reveals in the last mansions, to which no others can be compared.

Let us consider what I spoke of to you in the preceding chapter, namely, the manner of our Lord's presence with us. It is as if we had in a golden casket, a precious stone of the utmost value and virtue. We know most certainly that it is there, though we have never seen it, for if we carry it with us, the virtues of the stone do not cease to benefit us.\* Invisible though it is to our eyes, nevertheless, we continue to prize it, because we have proved by experience that it has relieved us from certain infirmities, which it has the power to cure. But we dare not look at it nor open the casket. Indeed, we cannot do so, for only he to whom the jewel belongs knows the way to open it, and though he has lent it to us for our benefit, as it is his, he has kept the key. When he wishes to show the jewel to us, he will open the casket, and he may even take out the stone, as he actually does when it seems good to him. Now let us suppose that out of kindness to the person to whom he has lent it, he is pleased suddenly to open the casket. That person will, of course, feel much more contented, and afterwards will recall with delight the magnificent brilliance of the stone; it will likewise be more vividly impressed on the memory.

In the same way, when our Lord wishes to grant a special favour to this soul, he shows her clearly his most sacred Humanity, after the manner that he wills, either as he was in the world, or after his Resurrection. But

\* In Saint Teresa's day, certain gems were supposed to have curative properties.

though he does so so swiftly that we could compare the vision to a lightning flash, this most glorious image remains very deeply graven on her imagination, so that I think it is impossible that it should ever leave her, until she sees it again where she will rejoice in it for ever. Though I say 'image,' you understand it is not a painted likeness of him that is seen, but he is truly alive, and sometimes he speaks to the soul, and even shows her great secrets.

But you must know, that although the soul may be intent on the vision for some time, it is as impossible to gaze upon it as upon the sun, and therefore it always passes away very swiftly. This is not, however, because the splendour causes suffering to the interior sight, as the sun does to the eyes. I speak of interior sight, because by this alone is the vision seen, and if it were an exterior vision, I could not say anything about it. The person whom I have mentioned, and of whom I am able to speak, has had no experience of such a thing, and it is not possible to give a precise account of what we have not experienced.

Our Lord's radiance is as an infused light, like that of a sun covered with a veil transparent as a diamond, if such could be made, while his vesture seems to be of fine cambric. Almost always when God grants this favour to a soul, rapture ensues, for our misery cannot bear such an awe-inspiring sight. I say 'awe-inspiring,' for besides being more beautiful and delightful than anyone can imagine, though one might live for a thousand years, and labour to depict it (for this vision greatly exceeds anything that our imagination or our understanding can conceive), our Lord's presence is of such sublime Majesty, that it inspires the soul with a great sense of awe.

Manifestly, it is not necessary to ask here how the soul knows who he is, without his speaking to her, for plainly he is seen to be the Lord of heaven and earth. This cannot be said of earthly kings, for in themselves they would be little esteemed, if they were not accompanied by their suite, or they were not announced to us. O Lord, how ignorant we Christians are of thee! What shall we do on that day when thou shalt come to judge us, since when thou comest with so much friendship to converse with thy spouse, thou dost inspire so much fear? Oh, daughters, what will it be when, in a tone of severity, he will say: "Go, accursed of my Father!"\* Let this thought remain with us along with the memory of the favour God has done us, and it will be no little help to us. Saint Jerome, saint though he was, was never without thoughts of the last judgment. Let us imitate him, and think nothing of the austerity of the Rule we follow, whatever we may have to suffer, for though it may last long, it is but as a moment in comparison with eternity.

I tell you of a truth, that in spite of my wickedness, fear of the torments of hell seemed to me to be as nothing compared with the thought that the damned would one day see those beautiful, meek and benign eyes filled with wrath, for this my heart found impossible to bear, and thus it has been with me all my life. How much more must the person have feared to whom this vision was shown, since excess of feeling deprived her of he

\* *St. Matth. XXV, 41.*

senses. This must be the cause of suspension, but our Lord comes to the aid of the soul's weakness, by uniting her with his greatness, in this exalted communication with God.

When it is possible to gaze on the Lord for some time, I do not believe it is a genuine vision; probab'y ardent meditation is causing an interior image of a certain face, but it will be like a dead thing in comparison with the other. Some people,—and I know that this is true, because they have talked to me about it, and not three or four, but many,—have so weak an imagination or an intelligence so acute, or I know not what may be the cause, but they become absorbed in such a way, that it seems to them plainly that they behold everything that they think about. But if they ever had a true vision, they would undoubtedly realise the deception. They themselves are composing in the imagination what they see, and afterwards there are no good effects, rather they are chilled, and much more so than if they had seen a pious picture. It is readily seen to be a thing not worthy of notice, for it is forgotten much more quickly than a dream.

In the experience of which we are treating, it is not thus, for the soul is very far from wishing to see things, or even thinking of it, when suddenly, a vision presents itself close beside her, and all the powers and senses are thrown into panic and confusion, but to this there succeeds a happy peace. Thus it was with Saint Paul,\* when he was over-thrown on seeing tempest and confusion in the sky; in the interior world, a great stir is created, and then in a moment, as I have said, everything becomes tranquil, and the soul is instructed in so many great truths, that she has need of no other master, for the true Wisdom, without labour on her part, has rid her of her torpor, and for some time the soul retains a conviction that the experience was from God. Though a contrary view may be expressed, it does not then suffice to make her fear deception. Later, however, if the confessor should suggest that she is deceived, God may leave her in hesitation as to whether or no, on account of her sins, this may be possible. Still, she cannot believe it, and she behaves as if under a temptation of the devil against faith, for he can create disturbance, but he cannot prevent the soul from remaining firm. On the contrary, the more he afflicts her, the more she is convinced that the demon could not have bestowed so many good things upon her (and so it is, and he has little power over her interior). He may represent our Lord, but not with such truth, majesty, and wonderful results.

As the confessors cannot see this, and perhaps the soul, on whom the favour is bestowed, does not know how to describe it, they fear, and with good reason. Thus it is necessary to act prudently, to wait until time reveals the fruit of these apparitions, observing step by step, whether they are producing humility in the soul, and fortitude in the practice of virtue, for if the devil be the author, a thousand falsehoods will soon betray him.

If the confessor have experience, and he has himself been favoured by God, it will not take him long to understand the matter; when it is

\* *Acts IX, 3, 4.*



related to him, he will discern whether the vision was from God or from the imagination or the devil, especially if his Majesty has bestowed upon him the gift of discernment of spirits; if he has this and some learning, without any personal experience, he will readily make the distinction.

It is most necessary, Sisters, to show great simplicity and truthfulness towards the confessor, I do not mean in the telling of your sins, for this is understood, but in the account you give of your prayer. If you do not act thus, you cannot be sure that you are going on well, nor that it is God who is teaching you. It pleases him greatly when you show sincerity and candour towards him who stands to you in his place, as you would do to himself, wishing that he shall know all your thoughts, and still more your works, however insignificant they may be. By this means you will not live in uncertainty or unrest, and though the visions should not be from God, if you have humility and a good conscience, you will receive no hurt; his Majesty knows how to draw good out of evil, and by the road along which the devil intends that you shall be lost, you will gain the more. Imagining that God is granting you great favours, you will make every effort to please him better, and to keep his face always in mind. As a great scholar once said, the devil is a clever artist, and if he should show you a very life-like image of the Lord, let it not trouble you, but let it re-ignite your devotion, and make war upon the devil with his own evil snares. Even if an artist be a very bad man, this is no reason why we should treat with irreverence the image that he makes, if it be of our sovereign Good.

This learned man thought it very wrong to do what some advise, and to show signs of contempt when a vision is seen, for he said that wherever we see a portrait of our King, we ought to reverence it. I see that he is right, for we should feel the same among ourselves. If we knew a benevolent person, and someone treated his portrait with such disrespect we should be very displeased; then how much more ought we to show respect when we see a crucifix or any other representation of our King.

Though I have written this before, I rejoice to repeat it here, because I have seen a person in great distress at being told to act in this way; I do not know who could have invented such a means of tormenting a soul. She could not do less than obey the confessor, when he gave her this advice, and she feared to be lost if she did not. Mine is, should you ever receive such advice, that you represent your difficulty with humility,—and do not follow it. I thoroughly appreciated the happy relief afforded me by him who put the matter to me thus.

The soul derives much good from this vision of our Lord, for when she is thinking of him, and of his life and passion, she recalls his most meek and beautiful countenance, and it is the greatest consolation, just as here on earth it would give us more joy to have seen a person who had shown us much kindness, than if we had never known him. I tell you that such a sweet memory is the greatest consolation and help. Many other good things come in its train, but as I have already said a great deal about the effects of these experiences, and more has yet to be said, I do not wish to tire myself or you.

Yet I must seriously warn you, when you know or hear that God is



granting these favours to certain souls, never to ask nor desire him to lead you by this way; though it may seem to you very good, and you hold it in honour and respect, it is wiser not to do so for several reasons:

First, because it is a want of humility to wish to be given what you have never deserved, and thus I fear they have not much who desire it. Just as a lowly workman is far from wishing to be king, for it seems to him impossible, since he does not deserve it, thus does it seem to the humble with regard to these favours. I believe they will never be granted when asked for, because the Lord first gives a deep self-knowledge. How can those who have such desires truly understand the great favour they have received, in not being already in hell?

Secondly, one who has such desires, is very certain to be deceived or to fall into danger, for the devil needs only to see a door slightly ajar, and he will play us a thousand tricks.

Thirdly, when there is a great desire, the imagination itself suggests, and the person herself thinks, that she sees that which she wishes, and she hears it, too, as those do who hunger for a thing, and dwell upon it all day, and it is given to them in a dream of the night!

Fourthly, because I should be very bold if I wished to choose my way, not knowing what is best for me. Rather, I leave it to the Lord who knows me, that he may lead me by that most suitable to me, so that in all things I may do his will.

Fifthly, do you think that the trials which they suffer to whom the Lord shows these favours are slight? No, but very severe indeed, and of many kinds. How do you know that you would be able to bear them?

Sixthly, what if you should lose where you think to gain, as Saul did by being king.\* Besides these, there are others, Sisters, and believe me, that it is safer to wish only for what God wills, for he knows us better than we know ourselves, and he loves us.

Let us place ourselves in his hands, so that his will may be done in us, for if with a firm will we are always thus disposed, we cannot go astray. And keep this in mind, that though we may receive many such favours, we do not thereby merit more glory, but on the contrary, we are the more obliged to serve. Our Lord will not deprive us of anything by which we may gain more merit, and this is in our own hands. There are many holy persons who have never known what it is to receive one of these favours, and others who receive them are not so.

Also, do not think that they are continuous. On the contrary, for once that our Lord grants them, there are very many trials; therefore, the soul should not concern herself about receiving further privileges, but how to make better use of those she has. It is true that they should be a very great help in acquiring a higher perfection of virtue, but the soul who possesses virtues, having gained them at the cost of her own travail, will merit much more.

I know of a person to whom our Lord had shown certain of these favours, and even two persons, one of them a man, who were so desirous of serving his Majesty, and at their own cost, without these great consola-

\* *I Kings XV*, 26-28.

tions, and they were even anxious to suffer, that they complained to our Lord, because he gave them to them, and if they had been able, they would have refused to receive them. I am speaking now of consolations which the Lord gives in contemplation, and not of those visions, from which, in fact, they derive great benefit, and esteem greatly.

It is true that these desires are also supernatural, and are those of enamoured souls, who wish our Lord to see that they do not serve him for reward, and thus, as I have said, it would never occur to them that they ought to receive glory for anything, and with this idea to make efforts to serve him. But they serve to satisfy love, whose nature it is to be active in a thousand ways. Love seeks, if possible, to find means of consuming herself for him, and if, for God's greater glory, it were necessary to remain for ever annihilated, the loving soul would gladly consent.

May he be praised for ever, amen; who abasing himself to communicate with creatures so miserable, wishes thus to manifest his greatness.

### Chapter X

*The Saint speaks of other favours, which God grants to the soul in a different manner from those already mentioned, and of the great profit arising from them.*

By these apparitions, the Lord communicates himself to the soul in many ways; sometimes when she is troubled, at other times, when she is about to undertake some difficult work, and again, when his Majesty wishes to regale himself with her, and to cheer her. It is not necessary to specify further each mode of visitation; this is not my intention, but only to explain each of the different kinds of visions likely to occur in this way, so far as I understand them, to the end that you may know, Sisters, how they take place, and what are the effects they leave behind them, so that you be not deluded into thinking that every fancy is a vision, nor when it is actually so, that you be upset or distressed, for the devil gains much, and is immensely pleased when he sees a soul disturbed and in doubt. He knows very well that this hinders her from employing herself entirely in loving and praising God.

His Majesty communicates himself to souls in other much more exalted and less dangerous ways. I believe that the devil is unable to counterfeit these favours, which on account of their very occult nature, are more difficult of description than the imaginary visions.

It sometimes happens that the Lord is pleased, when the soul is at prayer and in full possession of her senses, to suspend them, and he then reveals great secrets to her, which she seems to apprehend in God himself. These are not visions of the most sacred Humanity, nor, though I say that she sees, does she see anything, because it is not an imaginary vision, but purely intellectual, in which it is disclosed to her how in God we may behold all things, and how he contains all things in himself. It is of great

profit to the soul, because though it passes in the space of a Memento, it remains deeply impressed on the mind. It causes the utmost confusion, because it reveals very clearly the evil of offending God, since in this same God,—I mean, being within him,—we do all our evil deeds.

I will draw a comparison, if I can, to explain it to you, for though it is thus, and we often hear it, either we do not pay attention, or we do not wish to realise it, for it seems impossible, if we fully understood, that we should be so bold as we are.

Let us now look upon God as a very spacious and beautiful mansion or palace. This palace, as I say, is God himself. Now, can the sinner leave this palace to work his evil deeds? No, certainly not, but within this very palace, which is God himself, are committed all the abominations and impurities and evil deeds of which we sinners are guilty. Oh, what a terrifying thing! worthy of grave consideration, and very profitable to us who know so little, and do not fully grasp these truths; if we did, it would be impossible to us to show such foolish audacity as we do. Consider, Sisters, the great mercy and long-suffering of God in not immediately crushing us there. Let us give him heartfelt thanks, and be ashamed to resent anything that is done or said against ourselves. It is the most despicable thing in the world, when we see that God our Creator tolerates so much from his creatures within himself, that we sometimes grieve over a single word that is said against us in our absence, and perhaps with no evil intention. Oh, misery of the human race! How long, daughters, shall we delay in imitating in some measure this great God? Oh, let us not imagine we do anything in bearing injuries! Rather, we should be only too glad to suffer everything, and to love those who make us suffer, seeing that this great God has not given up loving us, though we have offended him deeply. He has therefore, every right to wish that we should all pardon one another, whatever may be the wrong done to us. I tell you, daughters, that though this vision soon fades, it is a special favour to the soul to whom the Lord grants it, if she care to profit by it, by keeping it constantly in mind.

Again, very suddenly, and in an indescribable manner, it may happen that God will reveal a truth in himself, which seems to leave in obscurity all the truths that there are in created things. It is given to the soul very clearly to understand that he alone is the Truth, who cannot lie. At the same time, she sees, that as David said in one of the Psalms: "all men are liars,"\* which she would never have thus understood, though she might hear it constantly: God is the Truth, which cannot fail. I remember Pilate,† and how earnestly he questioned our Lord, when, during his Passion, he proclaimed himself to be the Truth, and I see, too, how little here below, we understand this Supreme Truth. I should like to be able to speak more to the point about this, but I cannot. Let us draw from it, Sisters, this conclusion: that we shall be wise to study how to walk always in this Truth, so as to conform ourselves in some degree to our God and Spouse.

I do not merely mean to say that we should not tell lies, for this, glory

\* *Ps. CXV, 2.*      † *St. John XVIII, 38.*

be to God, I see already that you take special care, on no account, to do, but that in every way possible, we should walk in truth before God and man. We must especially beware of wishing to be esteemed as better than we are, in our works, attributing to God what is his, and to ourselves what is ours, striving to imitate the Truth in all things. Thus, we shall have little esteem for this world, for it is but deception and falsehood, and as such will not endure.

I was once considering what was the reason why our Lord was so fond of the virtue of humility, and there came into my mind,—it seemed to me without pre-meditation and suddenly, this: that it is because God is the Supreme Truth, and to be humble is to walk in the truth. It is a very real truth, that we have no good thing in ourselves, but only misery and nothingness, and he who does not realise this, walks in untruth. He who best understands this is, therefore, the more pleasing to the Supreme Truth, because he walks in the truth. May it please God, daughters, to grant us the favour never to depart from this knowledge of ourselves. Amen.

These are the favours which our Lord grants to the soul who is his true spouse, and wishes to do his will in all things. He desires to give her some idea beforehand of what she has to do, and of his greatness. There is no need to say more, except to add, that two things, of which I have spoken, seem to me of first importance: that in these favours there is nothing to fear; the Lord has given them, and we should praise him for them. Also, that the devil, and even our own imagination, have, in my opinion, but little access here, and thus the soul may rest in great security.

### Chapter XI

*The Saint speaks of certain desires to enjoy his presence, which God inspires in the soul, of so strong and impetuous a nature as to endanger life. She speaks also of the good effects of this divine favour.*

Will all these favours that the Spouse bestows on the soul, suffice to satisfy the little dove or butterfly (do not think that I have forgotten her), so that she will settle down where she has to die? Indeed, no. On the contrary, she is much worse. Though she may receive these favours for many years, she is always moaning and tearful, for each one of them leaves her in greater affliction. This is because she is coming to know more and more of the glories of her God, and seeing herself in absence and separation from the delight of his presence, her desire for him is always increasing. Also, love grows, as more and more it is disclosed to her how truly this great God and Lord deserves to be loved. Her desire continues, little by little, to augment during these years, until it becomes so great a pain as I will now describe.

I have said 'years,' in accordance with what has been the experience of the person of whom I have spoken, but it must be clearly understood that we cannot set a term to God, and in the space of a Memento, he may



raise a soul to the most exalted heights that have been spoken of here His Majesty is so powerful, that he can do what he wills, and he is desirous of doing a great deal for us.

Now come times, when these anxieties, tears, sighs, and the strong impetuositities of which we have spoken, and which have proceeded from the great sentiment of our love, become as nothing in comparison with a fresh experience, for these have been as a smouldering fire, and they are bearable, though painful. Now, it often happens, when the soul, continuing her way, all on fire within, has a passing thought, or hears some word suggesting that death is long in coming, that she seems to receive a blow, coming from elsewhere, she knows not whence nor how, but it is as if she were struck by a fiery dart. I do not say that it is a dart, but whatever it may be, it is clearly seen that it could not proceed from a natural cause. Neither is it a blow, though I call it so; but it inflicts a severe wound, and not, in my opinion, in that part where, naturally speaking, we feel pain, but in the most profound and intimate depths of the soul, where this bolt of fire, which descends so swiftly, reduces to powder whatever it finds of our earthly nature. So long as it is felt, it is impossible to have any remembrance of ourselves, because in an instant, our powers are deprived of motion in such a way, that no freedom remains for anything except that which can only increase this pain. I do not wish to appear to exaggerate, because truly I see that I fall short of the reality, for want of words to describe it. It is a complete ravishment of the senses and powers, except in so far as they help to make this affliction more keenly felt.

The understanding remains fully aware of the reasons why that soul suffers in being absent from God, and his Majesty augments the suffering by a vivid manifestation of himself at that time, which increases the pain to such a degree, that the person may give forth loud cries, which she cannot suppress, although she may be patient and inured to suffering great pain, for this sensation is not in the body, but, as I said, in the depths of the soul. The person in question then understood, how much stronger are the sensations of the soul than those of the body, and she saw that it must be after this manner, that souls suffer in Purgatory, where the absence of the body does not prevent them from suffering much more than anyone here below suffers, while still in the body. I saw a person in this state, who, I thought, really would die, and it was no wonder, for she certainly ran great danger of death. Though this suffering does not last long, it leaves the body disjointed, and the pulse at that time is so slow, that it seems as if the person were about to render up her soul to God, neither more nor less. The natural heat of the body fails, while the soul is so inflamed, that with a very little more, God would have fulfilled her desires. This is not because she feels any pain in the body, little or much, though it is out of joint, as I have said, and to such an extent that two or three days may elapse before she has even strength to write, and then it is a great effort, and it seems to me that the body always afterwards remains with less than its former strength. The cause of the want of feeling in the body must be the excessive interior suffering of the soul; just as when the body is suffering severely in one part, though it may have many other pains, they are scarcely noticed; this I have often proved; but now I do not believe that any-

thing would be felt, to any degree, even if the body were cut in pieces.

You may say that all this is an imperfection, and ask why she does not conform herself with the will of God, since she has surrendered herself to him. Hitherto she has been able to do this, and her life has passed thus; now it is impossible, for her reason no longer dominates her nor her thoughts, except to provide a reason for her pain. Since she is absent from her Beloved, why should she wish to live?

The soul is conscious of an extreme solitude, for she finds no companionship in the whole created world, nor, I believe, would she find it in the whole company of heaven, since they are not he whom she loves; on the contrary, all torment her. She is as one suspended, who cannot rest in anything of earth, nor yet can she rise to heaven; consumed with thirst she cannot reach the water; nor can the thirst be borne. It is already such that no water will quench it, nor does she wish to quench it with any but the water of which our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman,\* and this is not given to her.

Oh, God bless me, Lord! how cruel thou art to thy lovers! Yet all is little in comparison with what thou hast in store for them. It is only fair that what is worth much should cost much; how much more when it is a question of purifying this soul that she may enter the seventh Mansion, just as souls who are to enter heaven, are cleansed in Purgatory, for then this suffering seems as little as a drop of water in the ocean.

All this torment and affliction, than which I believe no earthly pains can be greater, (and this person had suffered many, both corporal and spiritual), seem to her as nothing in comparison with the favours to be received. The soul feels that this pain is so precious as to be beyond her power to merit, but this does not serve in any way to alleviate it, only it helps her to bear it very gladly, and she would suffer it all her life if God so willed, though it would not be to die once, but to be always dying, for truly it is no less.

Now let us consider, Sisters, those who are in hell, who have not this conformity, nor that contentment and sweetness which God pours into the soul; also they see that there is no profit in their torment, but that they go on suffering more and more (I mean more and more as to accidental pains). The torments of the soul are so much more severe than those of the body, and those that the lost suffer incomparably greater than those of which we have just spoken. Also, they see that their pains must last for ever and ever; then what will become of those unhappy souls?

In this brief life, what can we do or suffer that will suffice in any way to save us from such terrible and eternal torments? I repeat that it is impossible to give any idea of the painful thing it is to suffer in the soul, to anyone who has not experienced it, and how different it is from bodily pain. Our Lord himself wishes us to understand it, so that we may the better realise how very deeply we are indebted to him for having brought us to an estate, in which, by his mercy, we may hope that we are to be set free from, and to obtain pardon for our sins.

\* *St. John IV, 15.*

Now to return to what we were discussing. We left this soul in great torment, which, however, at its worst, does not last long, three or four hours at the most; for if it continued for some time, without a miracle, human weakness could not support it. It has happened that after no more than a quarter of an hour, the person I have mentioned was left in pieces. Certainly on that occasion, (it was on the last day of Paschaltide, during which she had been in so much aridity, that she could scarcely grasp the significance of the Feast), being in conversation, and hearing but one word about the seeming endlessness of life, she completely lost consciousness, so piercing was her pain. Do you imagine that she could resist? No more than if, having plunged into a fire, you might wish to deprive the flames of sufficient heat to burn you!

The suffering is not such that it can be disguised, without those who are present being made aware of the great danger attending it, though, of the interior effects they cannot be witnesses. It is true that these persons afford the soul a certain companionship, but they are as shadows, and thus appear all earthly things.

If, at any time, any among you find yourselves in this state, it is well to realise that our weakness and nature may contribute. Sometimes it happens, that when the soul, as you have seen, is dying of the desire to die, and in so much distress, that she seems to be almost on the point of leaving the body, nevertheless, she fears, and would wish the pain to abate, lest she should really die. Natural weakness is obviously the cause of this fear, and on the other hand, her desire of death does not leave her, nor is it possible to find a remedy which will rid her of this pain, until the Lord himself takes it away. This he usually does by plunging her in rapture, or granting her some vision by which she is consoled and strengthened by the true Comforter, and she consents to live so long as he wills.

This is a painful experience, but it leaves such good effects in the soul, that she loses all fear of succeeding trials, which appear as nothing to her in comparison with the grievous torment she has endured. She has reaped so much benefit, in fact, that she would rejoice thus to suffer often, but even this is not in her power, nor can she find means of procuring this favour again until the Lord wills, any more than she can either resist or rid herself of it when it comes.

She has a much greater contempt for the world than before, since she sees that it contains nothing which could avail her in her suffering. Also, she is more detached from creatures, because she finds that the Creator alone is he who can console and satisfy her. She has also a much greater fear of offending him, and anxiety not to do so, because she sees that he can torment as well as console.

It seems to me that on this spiritual road, there are two things which expose us to danger of death. One is this that I have just described, which truly is a danger, and no slight one; the other is a very excessive joy and delight, of such an extreme kind, that truly, the soul appears to swoon, and with a tittle more, it seems inevitable that she must leave the body; in truth, did she do so, her happiness would not be slight.

Now you see, Sisters, whether I was right in saying that courage is necessary, and what reason the Lord will have when you ask him for

these favours, to repeat to you the reply that he gave to the sons of Zebedee: "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?"\* I believe that all of us, Sisters, would respond with a "Yes," and rightly so, for his Majesty gives strength to those whom he sees are in need of it, and he protects these souls in every way. He answers for them, when they are persecuted and calumniated, as he did for the Magdalene, though not in words, by his deeds.† At last, at last, before they die, he repays them for everything together, as now you shall see.

May he be for ever blessed, and may all creatures praise him. Amen.

\* *St. Matth. XX, 22. St. John XII, 7.*

† *St. Matth. XXVI, 10. St. Mark XIV, 6.*



## THE SEVENTH MANSIONS

*Chapter I*

*The Saint speaks of the great favours which God grants to the souls who have reached the seventh Mansions; she says that in her opinion there is some difference between the soul and the spirit, though they are one; there are noteworthy things in the chapter.*

It may seem to you, Sisters, that so much has been said about this spiritual passage, that there cannot possibly be anything more to say, but to think thus would be extremely foolish, since the greatness of God is infinite, and his works also are without end. Who shall conclude the tale of his mercies and glories? It is impossible, so do not be surprised at what I have said, and still have to say, for it is no more than a cipher of all that there is to say concerning God.

He shows us extreme kindness in granting these favours to someone from whom we may come to know them, for the more we learn in what manner he communicates himself to creatures, the more we shall praise him, and the more we shall compel ourselves not to hold cheaply the soul in which the Lord takes so deep a delight. Each one of us has a soul, but as we do not value it as a creature deserves to be valued, that is made in the image of God, we do not understand the great secrets it contains.

May his Majesty be pleased to guide my pen, and make me understand how to say something to you about the many hidden things there are to speak of, and that God reveals to those whom he introduces into this Mansion. I have earnestly implored his Majesty for this, since he knows my intention to be that his mercies shall not remain hidden, and that his name may be ever more praised and glorified.

My hope is that not for my sake but for yours, Sisters, he will do me this favour, so that you may understand how important it is that you do not hinder the celebration of the spiritual marriage of your Spouse with your souls, which, as you will see, brings with it so many blessings. Oh, great God! a creature so miserable as I should surely tremble to treat of a subject so far removed from anything that I deserve to comprehend. In truth, I have been in great embarrassment, considering whether it might not be better to dismiss the subject of this Mansion with a few words, because I fear that some may think that I know it by experience, and it causes me the greatest shame; it is a terrifying thing, knowing myself for what I am. On the other hand, it seemed to me that all this might be only temptation and weakness, even though many such judgments are passed upon me. May God be praised and understood even a little better, and let all the world revile me, especially as I may be dead before this comes to light. Blessed be he who lives, and will live for ever! Amen.

When our Lord is pleased to take pity on this soul, because of all that she suffers, and has suffered, in her desire for him, whom already he has

\* *Ps. CXLIV, 3.*

taken spiritually for his spouse, before the spiritual marriage is consummated, he introduces her into his own Mansion, which is the seventh. For just as he has a habitation in heaven, so ought his Majesty to have one in the soul, where he alone may dwell, and which we may call another heaven.

It is very important, Sisters, that we should not understand the soul to be something dark; as we do not see it, we are apt to think that it has no other light interiorly, than this which we see without, and that there is within the soul a certain degree of darkness. I confess that this must be so, when the soul is not in a state of grace, but this is not for want of the Sun of Justice, who is within her, giving her being, but because she is not capable of receiving the light, as I believe I said in the first Mansion.

A certain person realised that such an unhappy soul is as those who are in a dark prison, bound hand and foot, and unable to do a single good action which could gain them merit; blind also and dumb. We may well compassionate such, and remember that there was a time when we were in the same state, and that our Lord may also have mercy on them. Let us take special care, Sisters, to beg him to do so, and not to neglect it, for it is most charitable alms to pray for those who are in mortal sin; much more so than it would be to help in the following case. If we were to see a Christian, with his hands tied behind him by a strong chain, and he lashed to a post and dying of hunger, not for want of something to eat, for he has beside him very excellent food, but he cannot reach it, to put it to his mouth; he even feels a great loathing for it, although he sees that he is going to die, and that for ever, would it not be great cruelty to stand looking at him, without raising the food to his mouth? But what if, by your prayer, you rid him of his chains? Now you understand. For the love of God, I beg you always to remember such souls in your prayers.

However, we are not now speaking of such souls, but of those who by the mercy of God have done penance for their sins, and are in a state of grace. We should regard a soul, not as a thing straitened and limited, but as an interior world, which comprises so many and such charming mansions as you have seen, and it is right to think thus, since within this soul there is a dwelling-place for God.

Now when his Majesty is pleased to grant to the soul the favour described as the spiritual marriage, he first introduces her into his dwelling, and he does not wish, as heretofore, that it should be by a rapture, in which, as I verily believe, he united her to himself then, nor by the prayer of union, of which we have spoken, and in which the soul does not seem to be called to enter into her centre, as in this mansion, but only into the superior part of herself. It matters little whether in one way or another his Majesty conferred this grace, but he made her blind and dumb, as Saint Paul was at the time of his conversion,\* and deprived her of the knowledge of how and in what manner, the favour she enjoyed was bestowed; the great delight that the soul felt then was in seeing herself close to God. But when he united her with himself at that time, she

\* *Acts IX*, 8.

understood nothing, because the powers were all in suspension.

Now, union is after another manner; our good God wishes to take away the scales from her eyes,\* that she may see and understand something of the favour he is granting her. The soul is introduced into this mansion in a strange manner, by an intellectual vision or representation of the truth, in which the three Persons of the most holy Trinity are shown to her by the light of a flame, which at once illumines her mind like a most brilliant cloud. An admirable knowledge is conveyed to her, that these three divine Persons, though distinct, are one in substance, in power, in wisdom, and are one only God; in such wise, that what we hold by faith the soul now, we may say, actually beholds, though this sight is neither that of the eyes of the body, nor of the soul, because it is not an imaginative vision. The three Persons now communicate themselves to her, speak to her, and give her understanding of those words that the Gospel tells us our Lord spoke, when he promised that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit would come and dwell with the soul who loves him, and keeps his commandments.† Oh, my God! what a difference there is between hearing these words and believing them, and understanding, in this manner, how true they are! Each day this person is more astonished, for it seems to her that they never leave her; she sees, in the manner described above, that they are evidently in the interior of her soul, in the very centre, in its inmost depths, but because she has no learning, she does not know how to speak of the consciousness she has of the divine companionship within her.

You may suppose that this being the case, she will not be herself, but will be so inebriated that she can understand nothing. You are wrong, for much better than formerly is she able to perform all that God is pleased to ask of her, and when she is unoccupied, she remains with that delightful Company. If the soul does not forsake God, in my opinion, he will never fail to make her thus continuously aware of his presence; indeed, she feels great confidence that he will not forsake her, so that she loses this favour, now that he has granted it to her; and she is permitted thus to think, though she does not cease to be more vigilant than ever, that she may not displease him in any way.

It must be understood that the realisation of this Presence is not always so intense, I mean so clear as at first, or at certain other times, when God wishes to give the soul this refreshment, because if it were, it would be impossible to engage in anything, or even to live among people; but though the divine Persons are not always beheld in such a bright light, whenever the soul reflects, she finds this Companionship within her. Let us suppose now that a person is with others in a very light room; the shutters are closed, and she finds herself in the dark; but because the light has been taken away, and she cannot see her companions, she does not cease to be conscious of their presence. The question may be raised, when the light returns, can the soul, at will, see those three divine Persons again? Until the Lord wills to open the shutter of the understanding, this is not in her power, but he shows her immense kindness in never going

\* *Acts IX*, 18.

† *St. John XIV*, 23.

away from her, and in wishing her so clearly so realise it.

The divine Majesty seems now to wish to dispose the soul for more of this divine Companionship, for obviously it will be a great assistance towards a higher perfection, and will rid her of the fear that some of the former favours have caused her, as we have seen. Thus it has been with the person of whom I spoke.\* She found herself improved in every way, and it seemed to her no matter what her trials and occupations, the inmost centre of her soul remained always the habitation of those divine Persons.

There seemed to be in some way division in her soul, for soon after God had granted her this favour, she found herself in severe trials, and she complained of her soul after the manner in which Martha complained of Mary.† Sometimes she said to her, that there she was, enjoying that divine peace at will, and leaving to her so many labours and duties, that she could not keep her company. This may seem nonsense to you, daughters, but truly it is a fact, and though we know that the soul is undivided, what I have said is no illusion, but it very frequently happens. For this reason I said that interior experiences prove that there is in some way a very real difference between the soul and the spirit, though they may be but one. One recognises a division so subtle, that sometimes it seems that the two are operating in different ways, according to the attraction that the Lord wills to give them. Also, it seems to me that the soul is a different thing from the powers, and that they are not one and the same.

In the interior, there are so many and such delicate divergences, that it would be audacity in me to set myself to distinguish them. We shall behold them where, if the Lord in his mercy grant us the favour of conducting us thither, all secrets will be revealed.

## Chapter II

*The Saint continues the same subject; she speaks of the difference between spiritual union and the spiritual marriage; she explains it by delicate illustrations.*

Now let us go on to discuss the divine and spiritual marriage, though this great favour cannot be consummated in perfection while we live here below, for if we were to separate ourselves from God, this supreme blessing would be lost.

When first God grants this favour, his Majesty wills to show himself to the soul in an imaginary vision of his most Sacred Humanity, so that she may be fully cognisant of, and no longer in ignorance of the sovereign gift she is about to receive. To other persons he may manifest himself in another way; to her of whom we are speaking, the Lord appeared after she had communicated, in the great splendour, beauty and majesty that he had after his resurrection. He told her that the time had come when she should make his interests her own, and he would protect hers, with

\* *The Saint herself.*      † *St. Luke X, 40.*



other words, rather to be heard than repeated.

You may think that there was nothing new in this, as the Lord had appeared in this manner at other times; it was so different, however, that it left the person quite bewildered and astonished, first, because of the efficacy of the vision ; secondly, because of the words that were spoken, and also because the vision was in the interior of the soul, where hitherto, except for the preceding vision, she had seen no others. You must understand that there is an essential difference between those of the past, and the visions seen in this mansion. Besides, there is as great a difference between the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage as there is between two people who are affianced, and those who cannot be separated.

I have said before that though I make use of these similitudes, because there are no others that serve my purpose so well, it must be understood that here there is no more thought of the body than if the soul were without it, and were pure spirit; and in the spiritual marriage even less. This secret union takes place in the inmost centre of the soul, where God himself must dwell. In my opinion, it is not necessary that there should be a door by which to enter; I repeat that a door is not needed. Up to this point, all that has been described has been perceived by the senses and powers, and the apparition of the Humanity of the Lord must also be so; but what passes in the union of the spiritual marriage is very different. The Lord appears in the soul's centre, not in an intellectual,\* but in an imaginary vision, though far more exquisite than any yet described, in the same way as he appeared to his Apostles, without entering by the door, when he said: "Pax vobis"†.

It is a secret so marvellous and a favour so exalted, that God then communicates in an instant to the soul, and the delight felt is so intense that I know not to what I can compare it. The Lord seems to wish to manifest to her at that moment, in a far more exalted manner than by any vision or spiritual gust, what is the glory of heaven. It is impossible to say more than this: that so far as can be understood, the soul, I mean the spirit of this soul, becomes one thing with God. His Majesty who is also a spirit, wishes to demonstrate the love that he has for us in its full extent to certain persons, in order that we may praise his greatness, for that he has willed to unite himself in such a manner with a creature, and as those who can no longer be separated, he does not wish to be separated from her.

The spiritual betrothal is different, for there are frequent partings, and the union also is different. Although union means that two things are joined together in one, yet in fact they may separate, and each may remain alone, as we frequently see, for the grace of union with our Lord passes quickly, and the soul then finds herself without that companionship, at least without any sense of it.

In this other favour from our Lord, it is not so, because the soul

\* *In the Spanish there seems to be an accidental transposition of the words "imaginaria" and "intellectual." At the beginning of the chapter, it is stated that an imaginary vision is granted here.*

† *St. John XX, 19.*

always has her God in her inmost centre. We may say that this union is as if two wax candles were joined together so closely, that their light is but one, or that the wick, the light, and the wax make but one candle, but it is possible to separate one candle from the other, so that they are again two candles, or the wick from the wax.

The spiritual marriage may also be compared to water falling from the sky into a river or fountain, where the waters are united, and it would no longer be possible to divide them, or to separate the water of the river from that which has fallen from the heavens. Or it may be likened to a tiny stream which falls into the sea; there is no possibility of separating them. Yet again, if in a room there are two windows, by which a good deal of light enters, though it enters divided, it combines to make but one light.

Perhaps, when Saint Paul said: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit"\* he alluded to this royal marriage, which presupposes his Majesty's having attached himself by union to the soul. Saint Paul also says: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"† and it seems to me that the soul can also say this here. This is where the little butterfly that we have mentioned, dies, and with the utmost joy, because Christ has already become her life.

All this is better understood as time goes on, by the effects produced. The soul sees clearly by certain secret impressions, that it is God who gives life to our soul. These impressions are sometimes so vivid that it is impossible to doubt them; the soul is very conscious of them, although she does not know how to describe them. They evoke such sentiments as sometimes find expression in loving words, which she finds it impossible to repress: "Oh, Life of my life, and Sustainer who sustains me!" and words of this kind, for from those divine breasts, from which God seems to be always sustaining the soul, flow forth streams of milk to strengthen all the inhabitants of the Castle. The Lord seems to wish that all should share in some sort the great joy of the soul, for from that gushing river in which the tiny stream is consumed, there is sometimes thrown up a splash of that same water, to refresh the powers which have to serve the two spouses. And just as a person would be aware of the water into which she might be unexpectedly and suddenly plunged, and she would not be able to escape the sensation, in the same manner and even with more certitude, these divine operations make themselves felt, as I have said.

Also, it would not be possible that a great volume of water should overtake us, if it had not a beginning, as I have said, and therefore it is clear that there is, in our interior, Someone, who casts these darts which give life to our life, and that there is a Sun from whence proceeds a great light that is sent forth into the interior recesses of the soul. She, as I have said, does not move from that centre, nor does she lose her peace, for he who gave it to the Apostles, when they were assembled, can also give it to her. I am inclined to think that this salutation of the Lord was much more efficacious than it sounds, and also that given to the glorious Magdalene, telling her that she was to be in peace‡

\* *I Cor. II, 17.*

† *Philip I, 21.*

‡ *St. Luke VII, 50.*

Our Lord's words are deeds, wrought within us, and thus they must have operated in those souls, who were already disposed to set aside every thing of the flesh, so that they might become purely spiritual, and be prepared for that celestial union with the uncreated Spirit, for it is very certain, that emptying ourselves of all that is created, and detaching ourselves from it for the love of God, the same Lord will fill us with himself.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was once praying for his Apostles, I do not know where, he asked that they might be one with his Father and with him, as he himself is in the Father and the Father in him.\* I do not know how there can be a greater love than this! Let none of us neglect to enter into this holy union, for thus said his Majesty: "Not only for them do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in me."† He also said: "I am in them."‡ Oh, great God, what true words! And how well the soul understands them, for in this prayer she sees it for herself! And how we should all understand it, if it were not for our faults! The words of Jesus Christ, our King and Lord, cannot fail, but as we fail, by not disposing ourselves for his favours, and detaching ourselves from all that can obscure this Light, we do not see ourselves in this Mirror that we contemplate, and in which our image is reflected.

Now to return to what we were saying. The Lord introduces the soul into his own mansion, which is the centre of the soul herself. Now, the empyrean heaven, where our Lord dwells, is said not to move like the rest, and thus, once she has entered this heaven, there seems to be no movement in this soul such as there is in the powers and the imagination, which can prejudice, or take away her peace. Perhaps I seem to imply, that the soul who has attained to receive this favour from God is assured of salvation, and secure against relapse. I do not mean any such thing; and whenever I speak in such a manner, as to make it appear that the soul is in safety, it must be understood, that she is only so, so long as his Majesty holds her in his hand, and she does not offend him. At least, I know for certain, that the person in question, though she finds herself in this state, and has continued in it for years, does not consider herself secure, but she is much more fearful than before, and is watchful not to commit even the least offence against God, of whatever kind. She has great desires to serve him, as will be said presently, and usually pain and confusion at seeing how little she can do, and how deep is her obligation. This is no small cross, but an extremely heavy penance; but in the matter of penances, the heavier they are the more this soul rejoices, and indeed it is a veritable penance when God deprives her of the health and strength to enable her to accomplish them. I have spoken elsewhere of the great pain this gives her, but here it is much greater, for everything reaches her now through the Root into which she is grafted. The tree that is set beside running waters is fresher and more fruitful than others,§ then why should we marvel at the desires of this soul, since her vital spirit is made one with the celestial water of which we have spoken?

Returning now to what I was saying, it must not be thought that the powers and senses and passions are always in this peace. The soul, yes,

\**St. John XVII, 21.* †*St. John XVII, 20.* ‡*St. John XIII, 23.* § *Ps. I, 3.*



but in the other Mansions, there are still periods of warfare, trials and weariness; yet they are of such a kind, that generally speaking, at least, they do not deprive her of her peace and resting-place.

This centre of our soul or spirit is a thing so hard to explain, and even to believe in, that I fear, Sisters, by my not knowing how to express myself, I may cause you some temptation not to believe what I say, since it is difficult to see how the soul can be at peace in herself, while she has trials and griefs. I should like to give you one or two illustrations. Please God, they may be such as will explain somewhat; but if they do not, I know that what I have said is true.

The King is in his palace, and though many wars and unhappy events are taking place in his kingdom, still, he does not, on this account, forsake his post. Thus, in other mansions, there may be disturbances and venomous creatures, and noise, yet no-one will enter the seventh mansion to force the soul to leave it; neither do the things that she hears, for though they give her some degree of pain, it is not such as to agitate her and deprive her of peace; the passions are vanquished in such wise that they fear to enter there, lest they come forth still further subdued. Again, the whole body may be in pain, but if the head be sound, it does not necessarily suffer with the body. I am laughing at myself over these comparisons, which do not satisfy me, but I do not find others. You may think what you will about it, what I have told you is the truth.

### Chapter III

*The Saint speaks of the good effects produced by the aforesaid prayer; it is necessary to pay attention to them, and to remember them, for there is an admirable difference between these effects, and those produced by former prayers.*

We may now say, then, that this little butterfly is dead, and in the utmost joy at having found repose, in that Christ is living in her.\* Let us see in what this life consists, and how it differs from the life that she once lived; we shall then see, by the effects, if what I have said be true. So far as I can understand, these effects are as follows:

First, a forgetfulness of self so entire that truly she seems no longer to exist; so completely is she changed, that she does not know herself, nor does she remember her former desires of heaven, of life, and of honour, for now all are employed in procuring God's glory. It seems that the words that his Majesty spoke to her have come true; that she was to care for his interests, and he would take care of hers. Therefore, whatever may happen, she is not concerned, but she is in a strange forgetfulness, so that she seems, as I have said, no longer to be nor to wish to be accounted for anything, anything, except when she realises that she can in some way enhance the glory and honour of God, for then she will

\* Gal. II, 20.



very gladly give her life.

Do not imagine by this, daughters, that she neglects to eat and to sleep, and to do all that she is obliged, in accordance with her state in life, though all these things are no little torment; but we are speaking of interior things, and there is little to say about her external works. Indeed, it is a grief to her to see how little strength she has for them. But she would not neglect, for anything in the world, to do her utmost, according to her ability, in the service of our Lord.

Secondly, a great desire for suffering, but not of such a disquieting kind as formerly, because in such souls, the supreme longing that they have that God's will may be accomplished in them, makes them regard as perfect whatever his Majesty does. If he wishes them to suffer, well and good; if not, it does not kill them, as formerly.

These souls also feel a great interior joy when they are persecuted, and an even greater peace than before, without any enmity towards those who injure or wish to injure them, on the contrary, they conceive a special love for them, of such a kind, that if they see them in any trial, they would do anything to free them from it, and they gladly recommend them to God. Also, they would rejoice to lose some of the favours that his Majesty confers on them, if they might be granted, instead, to their persecutors, so that they would cease to offend our Lord.

What astonishes me more than anything is, that the trial and affliction it was to them that they could not die, and enjoy the Lord's presence, are now exchanged for so great a desire to serve him, that through them he may be praised, and of benefiting some soul, if possible, that not only do they no longer crave to die, but they wish to live for many years, suffering supreme trials, so as to contribute to the praises of God, were it only in a very slight degree. If they knew with certainty, that their souls, on quitting the body, would enjoy God, they would not make much of it, nor dwell upon the glory of the Saints, nor desire to see themselves partakers in it. They have placed their glory in helping somewhat, if possible, their crucified Saviour, especially when they see what offences are committed against him, and how few people really care for his honour; they are detached from everything else. It is true that this is occasionally forgotten, and these souls return to their tender longings to gaze upon God, and desire to leave this place of exile, especially when they see how little they serve him. But afterwards, they return to the remembrance, and see in themselves, that they have him continually with them, and with this they are content. They offer to his Majesty their willingness to live, as a sacrifice that for them is the most costly they can make.

They have no more fear of dying than of a gentle rapture. It is the case, that he who gave them those early desires of death of such an exceedingly tormenting nature, now gives something different. May he be for ever blessed and praised! The fact is, that the longings of these souls are not now for consolations and delights, for they have with them the Lord himself, and his Majesty now lives in them. His life on earth was clearly nothing but a continual torment, and thus he may make ours, at least in desire; but for the rest, he deals with us according to our weakness, and when he sees the need, he well knows how to uphold us with

his strength.

These souls are thoroughly detached from everything, and they wish to be either always alone, or occupied in some way that may be profitable to souls. They have no aridities nor interior trials, but they have such a tender recollection of our Lord, that they never wish to cease from praising him. When they are inattentive, the Lord himself recalls them, in the way that has been described, and they realise unmistakably that this impulse (I do not know what word to use for it), proceeds from the interior of the soul, as I said concerning transports.

This impulse is extremely delicate, and it comes neither from the intelligence, nor from the memory, nor from any other source, that could lead us to suppose that the soul plays any part whatever in it. This is a favour so usual and so frequent, that she has been able to study it at leisure. In the same way that a fire, however great, never casts its flames downwards but upwards, so this interior movement is seen to come from the centre of the soul, and it awakens the powers.

Certainly, if there were nothing else to be gained in this way of prayer, but the knowledge of the anxious solicitude God shows to communicate himself to us, even beseeching us,—for it seems to be nothing less,—to keep him company, I should consider every trial worth while for the sake of those touches of his love, so suave and so penetrating. You will have learnt this by experience, Sisters, for I think when we reach the prayer of union, the Lord begins to show this solicitude, if we, on our side, do not neglect to keep his commandments.

When you receive these impulses, Sisters, remember that they come from this inmost Mansion, where God dwells in our soul, and praise him greatly, for certainly this message or order of the King is his own, written with so much love, and in a way that reveals his wish that you alone shall read the writing, and know what it asks of you on his behalf.

\*Then do not fail in any way to respond to his Majesty, whatever the occupation or even conversation that you may be engaged in, because it may often happen that our Lord will grant you this private favour in public. As the reply must be secret, it will be easy for you to follow my recommendation. You may make an act of love, or say with Saint Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"† His Majesty will teach you then many ways of pleasing him. It is a propitious time, for our Lord seems to be listening to us, and almost always, this delicate touch disposes the soul to make a generous response.

The difference, as I told you, between this mansion and the others is that the soul scarcely ever experiences dryness or interior disturbances, such as she always previously suffered from time to time, but she is nearly always in tranquillity. There is no fear that the devil can counterfeit this high favour; on the contrary, we may be absolutely certain that it is from God, because as has been said, neither the senses nor the powers have any part in it. His Majesty reveals himself to the soul, and places

\* This passage, down to "generous response" was written by the Saint on a piece of paper, and a note in the margin of the MS. indicates where the passage is to be inserted. † Acts IX, 6.

her beside him, where, in my opinion, the devil does not dare to enter, nor will the Lord permit him to do so. All the favours that he now showers upon the soul, as I have said, are independent of any aid from the soul herself, beyond that which she has already given in surrendering herself utterly to God.

Everything that the Lord does for the benefit of the soul, and to instruct her, is accomplished in the utmost calm, and so noiselessly, that to my thinking, it is like the building of Solomon's temple, where no noise of any kind was to be heard.\* Thus, in this temple of God, in this, his own mansion, he and the soul alone rejoice together in supreme silence.

The understanding need not stir, nor seek for anything more; the Lord who created it, wishes it now to be at rest, and only through a little chink to survey what is passing in the soul. This scene may be lost to it at times, or it may not be permitted to see it, but only for a very short interval, because in my opinion, the powers are not now suspended; they are simply not working, but remain as if wonder-struck. I myself wonder to see, that on arriving at this point, the soul no longer falls into raptures, except now and again, and then they are not the same kind of raptures and flight of the spirit, and they practically never take place in public, as before, when this was very usual.

Neither are they produced, as formerly, by occasions which excite devotion, such as beholding a sacred image, or hearing a sermon; for then, scarcely was it heard, or music either, when the poor little butterfly became so desirous of God, that quite ravished out of herself, she took flight. Now, whether because she has found her repose, or because she has seen so much in this mansion, that nothing surprises her, or because she is no longer lonely as she used to be, for she now enjoys divine companionship,—in short, daughters, I do not know the reason, but ever since the Lord began to show her what is in this mansion, and to introduce her into it, she has lost that great weakness which was such a trial to her, and of which she could not then rid herself.

Perhaps it is because the Lord has fortified her, enlarged, and prepared her, or it may be that for certain ends that he has in view, his Majesty wishes that what he has worked secretly in this soul be publicly known, for his judgments are above anything that we can imagine here below.

These effects, and others that we have discussed, are the good results of the degrees of prayer that have been described. God gives them when he binds the soul to himself, with that kiss which the Bride asks† for, for I understand that it is here that this petition is granted. Here the waters that quench her thirst are given to the wounded hind in abundance. Here she is delighted in the tabernacle of God.‡ Here the dove, which Noe sent out to see if the storm were spent, finds the olive branch, for a sign that she has found firm ground amid the rains and storms of this world.§

Oh, Jesus! Scripture must contain who shall say how many things concerning this peace of the soul. My God! since thou seest what it is worth to us, inspire Christians with the desire of seeking it, and from those to whom in thy mercy thou hast granted it, take it not away. Verily, until

\* *III Kings II*, 7. † *Cant. I*, 1. ‡ *Ps. XLI*, 2, 5. § *Gen. VIII*, 10, 11.



thou givest us the true peace, and dost remove us to that place where it can never end, we must always live in fear.

When I speak of the true peace, I do not mean to say, that this of which we are speaking is not true, but because the former warfare might begin again, if we separated ourselves from God. What must be the sentiments of these souls when they see the possibility of losing a happiness so great? It makes them walk more cautiously, endeavouring to draw strength from weakness, by not allowing anything to escape them, by their own negligence, which they could offer to God to please him better.

The more his Majesty favours them, the more they fear, and are diffident of themselves, and since, in discovering his glories they have learned more of his mercies, and their sins appear to them in a graver light, it often happens that like the publican, they dare not raise their eyes.\* At other times, they are a prey to longings that life may end, and that they may be in safety, though, because of the love that they have for him, the wish to live to serve God returns, as I have said, and they trust all that touches themselves to his mercy.

Sometimes, the many favours that he bestows on them overwhelm them, and they fear lest, as a boat that is over-loaded goes to the bottom, so they too may sink. I tell you, Sisters, that crosses are not wanting to them, but they do not disquiet them, or cause them to lose their peace. On the contrary, they soon pass, like a wave, or certain storms, and fair weather returns, for the presence of the Lord within them soon makes them forget everything else. May he be always blessed and praised by all creatures. Amen.

#### Chapter IV

*The Saint ends by explaining what, in her opinion, is the intention of our Lord in granting such great favours to the soul, and how necessary it is that Martha and Mary should be united. The chapter is very useful.*

You must not think, Sisters, that the effects I have described are always to be found in the same degree in souls. This is why I say, when I remember to do so: 'generally speaking,' for sometimes our Lord abandons these souls to their nature, and then it seems as though all the venomous creatures, in the precincts and mansions of this Castle, unite to take vengeance on them, for the time when they could not have them in their power. It is true that this state does not last long, one day, at the most, or a little more, and in this grievous turmoil, which usually arises from some external cause, the soul sees how greatly she gains by the good company that she keeps.

The Lord gives her great firmness, so that nothing deflects her from his service and her good resolutions. These seem rather to increase, nor can the evil beasts shake her resolve, even by a first movement, how-

\* *St. Luke XVIII, 13.*



ever slight. As I said, this time of temptation lasts only a short time; the Lord wishes her, for one thing, not to lose sight of what she is, but that she be always humble; for another, that she may the better understand what she owes to his Majesty, and the greatness of the favour she receives, and may give him praise.

Neither must you think, that in spite of the great desires and resolutions that these souls have not to fall into any imperfection for any thing in the world, that they escape falling into many, and even into sins. With full consent, no, for the Lord owes it to souls such as these to give them very special help against this. I am speaking of venial sins; as for mortal, so far as they can see, they are free, though not secure against them. They may unintentionally commit some, and this is no small torment to them. It is not less so, to these souls, to see others damning themselves, and though they have, to some degree, great hope that they will not be of their number, when they remember those whom the Scriptures tell us were the Lord's favourites, such as Solomon, who had so much intercourse with his Majesty,\* they cannot help fearing, as I have said.

And if one among you sees that she is over-confident in herself, let her fear the more, because as David said: "Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord."† May his Majesty always protect us; beg him to do so, that we may not offend him, for this protection is the greatest safe-guard we can have. May he be for ever praised. Amen.

It will be well, Sisters, to tell you what end the Lord has in view in granting so many favours in this world. Though by their effects, you must have understood, if you have reflected on the matter, I wish to speak again about it here, for let no-one think that it is merely for the delectation of these souls; that would be a serious mistake.

His Majesty can do us no greater favour than that of giving us a life which will be an imitation of that lived by his well-beloved Son. I am therefore convinced that these favours are intended to fortify our weakness, as I have already said several times, so that we may be able to imitate him in suffering much. We have always seen that those who were nearest to Christ our Lord were those who had the most severe trials. Consider those suffered by his glorious Mother and the glorious Apostles.

How was it, do you think, that Saint Paul was able to endure such excessive persecution?‡ We can see by his life, what effects are wrought by genuine visions, and the contemplation given by our Lord, which is not imaginary, or a deception of the evil one. Did he, perchance, hide himself in order to enjoy those delights, and not to learn other things? You know very well that he never had a day's rest, so far as we know, and neither can he have had much rest by night, for he earned his living then.§

I am very fond of the story of Saint Peter, when he was fleeing from prison, and our Lord appeared to him, and told him that he was going to Rome to be crucified afresh. We never say the Office for the Feast on which this story is recounted, but I feel a special consolation. How was Saint Peter affected by this favour from the Lord? and what did he do? He went at once to his death, and the Lord did him no small mercy in

\* *III Kings XI.* † *Ps. CXI, 1.* ‡ *Acts IX, 16.* § *I Thess. II, 9.*

finding someone to inflict it upon him.

Oh, my Sisters, how forgetful of her own repose, how indifferent to honours, and how empty of any wish for consideration, ought that soul to be in whom our Lord chooses so specially to dwell! For if she is much with him, as she should be, she will have little remembrance of herself; her memory will be employed entirely in recalling by what means she can please him better, and how she can demonstrate the love that she has for him.

This is the end of prayer, my daughters, this is what the spiritual marriage is for; from it are always born works, works! This is the unmistakable sign that a grace or favour comes from God, as I have already told you. Little will it profit me to be very recollected when alone; to offer acts of love to our Lord, proposing and promising to do marvels in his service, if, on going forth, an opportunity offers, and I do just the reverse. I am wrong in saying that it will profit me little, for all the time that we spend with God is of great profit, and though we are weak in fulfilling our resolutions afterwards, sometimes his Majesty gives us the grace to accomplish them in spite of ourselves. When he sees a soul very cowardly, he may even do this frequently; he will give her a very great trial, utterly repugnant to her taste, and bring her through it with so much profit to her, that she loses her fear of giving herself more generously to him.

When I said 'little profit,' I meant little in comparison with the much greater profit it is to us, when our works are conformable with our intentions and words. But even when they are not entirely so, they may, little by little, become so; if you wish prayer to benefit you, go on subduing your self-will; you will not fail to find countless opportunities for doing so in these little solitudes\* of ours. Mark me, that this is of far greater importance than I can possibly tell you. Fix your eyes on the Crucified, and you will think little of it.

If his Majesty displayed his love for us by such terrible sacrifices and torments, how can you wish to please him by words alone? Do you know what it means to be truly spiritual? It is to make ourselves the slaves of God, to belong to him, to be stamped with his brand, which is that of the +, and as those who have already given him their liberty, he can sell us as slaves to the whole world, as he was. In this he would not only do you no injury, but no small favour, and if you are not prepared for this, have no fear that you have made much progress, for the foundation of this entire spiritual building is humility. If this be not perfectly sincere, even for your own sakes, the Lord will not wish to raise the edifice to any height, lest it collapse utterly.

Therefore, Sisters, in order to lay good foundations, strive to be the least of all, and the slave of all, considering how and by what means you can please and serve your Sisters, for acting thus, you will do more for yourselves than for them, laying stones so firmly, that your Castle will not fall down. I repeat, that for this it is necessary not to rely on prayer and

\* *The Saint uses the word: rincones=corners. See Way of Perfection, chap. III, p. 14.*

contemplation alone, for if you do not acquire virtues, and exercise yourselves in them, you will always remain dwarfs, and please God that you only cease to grow, but you know very well, that he who is not growing is dwindling, and I hold that it is impossible to love to be content to be at a standstill.

It may seem to you that I am addressing myself to beginners, and that later, the soul may take some repose; but I have already told you that the interior rest of these souls depends on having very little exteriorly, nor do they desire it. Why do you think that the inspirations I have spoken of, or to say better, aspirations, have been given to the soul? And for what purpose are those messages that the soul sends forth from her centre to the people around the Castle, and in the mansions outside that in which she is? Is it that they may throw themselves down to sleep? No, no, no! more than ever, she battles with them from there, so that her powers and senses and her whole corporal self shall not be idle, as when she was suffering with them. For then she did not understand the great value of tribulations, nor that they were the means that God took to bring her where she now is, and where the companionship she enjoys gives her much greater strength than ever before.

If, as David said: "With the holy thou shalt be holy,"\* there is no doubt that when we are made one with the Strong, by the sovereign union of spirit with spirit, we shall become strong. Then we shall see what has been granted to the Saints, to enable them to suffer and to die.

It is very certain, that what the soul acquires in her centre, is shared by all who are in the Castle, and even by the body itself, which often seems to be without feeling, and strengthened with the strength that the soul has derived from drinking of the wine of that cellar,† into which the Spouse has brought her, and which he does not allow her to quit. This strength flows into the weak body, as the food that is taken into the stomach imparts force to the head, and to the whole being.

Thus the body, as long as it lives, is in very evil case, for however much it does, the interior strength of the soul demands of it much more. She makes war upon it, because all that it accomplishes seems to her as nothing. From thence come the great penances undertaken by many Saints, especially by the glorious Magdalene, who had been reared in so much luxury; and that hunger which our Father Elias‡ had for the honour of his God; and which Saint Dominic and Saint Francis had to bring souls to God, and to inspire them to praise him; and I tell you, that they must have suffered not a little, forgetful of themselves.

For my part, my Sisters, this zeal and contempt of self are what I wish that we strive to acquire, and that we occupy ourselves in prayer, and desire to do so, not for our own enjoyment, but that we may gain therein strength to serve God. Do not let us seek to travel along some unbeaten track, or we shall be lost at the most favourable moment, and it would be a novelty indeed, to think to have these favours from God, by any other road than that trodden by himself and all his Saints. Let no such idea cross our minds; believe me, Martha and Mary must unite to entertain

\* *Ps. XVII, 26.*    † *Canticle II.*    ‡ *III Kings XIX, 10.*



the Lord, to have him always with them, and not to lodge him badly, by giving him nothing to eat. Always seated at his feet, how shall Mary provide for him, placed as she is, if her sister do not help her ?\* His food is, that we lead souls to him by every means in our power, so that they may be saved, and may praise him.

You may say two things to me. First, that our Lord said, that Mary had chosen the better part.† But she had already fulfilled the office of Martha, in refreshing him by washing his feet and wiping them with her hair. Do you think that it would be a slight mortification to a lady such as she was, to go through the streets, and perhaps alone, for her fervour made her oblivious to the manner of her going, and to enter a dwelling she had never been in before, and later, to endure the murmurs of the Pharisee, and many other mortifying things, which she must have had to suffer?‡ It was strange to see in public a woman such as she, making so great a change, and, as we know, among such evil folk. It was enough for them to see that our Lord, whom they hated, was friendly with her, to make them throw up against her her former life, and to taunt her with wishing now to become a saint; clearly, she had by that time changed her attire and everything else.

Such things are said now of persons who are not so notorious, then what must have been said of her? I assure you, Sisters, that the "better part" came to her after severe trials and mortifications, and even to see his Majesty held in such abhorrence would be an intolerable pain. Then see what she afterwards suffered, at the death of the Lord! For myself, I am of the opinion, that she was not allowed to suffer martyrdom, because she had already been martyred in watching him die. Then, during the years that she lived afterwards, her absence from him must have been a terrible torment, so it is evident that she was not always in peaceful contemplation at the feet of the Master.

The second thing is, that since you can neither teach nor preach, as the Apostles did, gladly though you would do it, you cannot yourselves draw souls to God. To this I have replied in writing several times,§ and I am not sure that it is not in this "Interior Castle," but because it is a thing that I believe is often in your minds, along with cravings which the Lord gives you, I will speak again more implicitly about it here.

I have already warned you elsewhere, that sometimes the devil inspires us with great desires, in order to make us neglect the means we have at hand of serving our Lord in things possible to us, and then we remain satisfied with having desired the impossible. Leaving aside the great help that you can render by your prayers, do not seek to profit the whole world, but those who are your companions, and this will be a greater work, because you have special obligations towards them. Do you think that you do them little good by practising great humility, and mortification, and by serving them all, and showing great charity to everyone. Your love of the Lord may be fire, communicating itself to each of them,

\* *St. Luke X, 40.* † *Ibid. X, 42.* ‡ *Ibid. III, 37.*

§ *Way of Perfection, chap. I and III. Foundations, chap. I. Interior Castle, Sixth Mansions, chap. VI.*



and by your example, you may stimulate them continually to the practice of all the other virtues. This would be a great and very agreeable service to the Lord. By this work which is possible to you, his Majesty will see that if you could, you would do much more, and he will give you the same reward as if you had gained for him many souls.

You may object, that that is not to make conversions, for all here are good. What is that to you? The better they are, the more pleasing will their praises be to the Lord, and the more profitable their prayer to their neighbours.

To conclude, my Sisters, do not let us build towers without foundations, for the Lord does not consider so much the greatness of our deeds, as the love with which they are performed, and when we do all that we can, his Majesty will make it possible to us to do more and more. May we not tire, then, but during this short life, and perhaps it will be shorter for some of us than we think, let us offer to the Lord, interiorly and exteriorly, whatever we are able, so that his Majesty may unite it with that which he offered to his Father for us on the Cross, that it may have the value which our good-will has merited for it, however insignificant our works may be.

May it please his Majesty, Sisters, and my daughters, that we may all arrive where we may praise him for ever, and that he will give me the grace to perform somewhat of all that I have said, by the merits of his Son, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

But I assure you that I am filled with confusion, and therefore, I beg you by the same Lord, not to forget this poor, miserable woman in your prayers.

## I.H.S.

Though, when I commenced to write what I have just concluded, I felt the repugnance that I spoke of at the beginning, now that it is finished, I am very pleased, and I regard my labour to have been well worth while, though I confess that the work has cost me not a little.

Considering the strict enclosure that you keep, the little entertainment that you have, my Sisters, and the houses of some of your monasteries insufficiently equipped, it seems to me that you may find some consolation and delight in this interior Castle, which, without any permission from Superiors, you may enter, and spend there any hour you please. It is true, that you cannot enter all the Mansions by your own power, though it may seem to you to be great, but you must be introduced there by the Lord of the Castle himself; therefore, if you meet with any resistance, I advise you not to use force, because you might offend him so much, that he would never allow you to enter them.

He is very friendly towards the humble. Esteeming yourselves to be such that you do not deserve to enter even the third mansions, you will more quickly move him to admit you to the fifth, and there you may serve him in such wise, by constantly frequenting these mansions, that he will introduce you into the very mansion which he keeps for himself. From thence you will never depart, unless you were called by the Prioress, whose will this great Lord wishes you to fulfil as his own. And though by her command you may frequently be without, he will always hold the door open for you on your return.

Once accustomed to take your delight within this Castle, you will find support under every circumstance, however trying, in the hope, of which none can rob you, of returning to it.

Though I have described no more than seven Mansions, in each one of these there are many,—below, above, and at the sides,—with charming gardens, fountains, and such delightful things, that you will desire to spend yourselves in praising the great God, who created the soul to his image and likeness.

If you find anything in these instructions helpful in giving you knowledge of him, believe truly that his Majesty has said it for your satisfaction, and whatever of imperfection you may find is mine.

By the great desire that I have of doing something to help you to serve this my God and Lord, I beg you each time you read this writing, in my name, greatly to praise his Majesty, and implore him to give increase to his Church, and light to the Lutherans, and for me, that he will pardon my sins, and draw me out of Purgatory. I may indeed be there when this shall be given you to read, that is, if you are allowed to see it after the theologians have examined it. If there be any error in it, it will be due to my ignorance, for I submit myself in everything to the teaching of the holy Catholic and Roman Church, in which I am now living, and in which I protest and promise that I will live and die. May God our Lord be ever

praised and blessed. Amen. Amen.

This writing was completed in the Monastery of Saint Joseph at Avila, in the year one thousand, five hundred and seventy-seven, on the eve of the Feast of Saint Andrew, for the glory of God, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

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